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VAGARIES OF LIFE.

VOL. I.

VAGARIES OF LIFE.

BY

W. WELLINGTON CAIRNES, ESQ.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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TO

THE RIGHT HON. VISCOUNT TORRINGTON,

&c., &c., &c.

My dear Lord,

It is with feelings of unusual pleasure that, at the moment of completing this my earliest literary effort, I receive the encouraging permission to dedicate its lucubrations to one whose friendship and esteem I am so proud to possess.

I could have wished, it is true, that the homage which such an opportunity enables me to offer had borne some proportion to my sense of your Lordship's invariable and oft-experienced kindness; but while, in the present instance, I dare not venture beyond the expression of a hope that the *will* may be taken for the *deed*, I shall not fail to derive new courage from this gratifying proof of your Lordship's partiality—the

presage, I would willingly believe, of greater success to my future exertions.

Many months have elapsed, my Lord, since the incidents of the following tale were first arranged; but I have not, meantime, been idle: "*Sæpe stylum vertas*," said the old Roman, and I can vouch for the truth of his remark, even within the limits of my own narrow experience; indeed, what Waller declared of poets—that they lose half their fame, because the reader knows not what they have blotted—is equally true of the writer of fiction.

What *has* been retained, however, will abundantly suffice, I am afraid, to give umbrage to people of divers conditions. There will be some to express abhorrence of my outspoken plainness; some to discredit my heavy calendar of crime; and others—anchorites, impostors, *Mrs. Lawrences*—will denounce me, no doubt, as an unnatural and sacrilegious monster. Nevertheless, I am quite determined to fight it out with humbug of every order—in every class—and do proclaim, now and henceforth, *guerre à outrance* against it!

Taking comfort, in fine, from Dr. Johnson's assurance, that "abuse is often of service; there is nothing so dangerous to an author as silence; his name, like a shuttlecock, must be beaten backward and forward, or it falls to the ground," I will don my casque, and await the critics' charge.

Believe me, my dear Lord,

Ever faithfully,

Your Lordship's obedient servant,

W. WELLINGTON CAIRNES.

Paris, January, 1852.



VAGARIES OF LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

Mrs. Lawrence was one of those people who expect to have everything their own way. Happening, however, to be a woman of fortune, and having unrestricted authority over her large resources, being, moreover, a widow, it was surely natural that, in so far as related to her household, she should pocket the keys of life and death. Age was stealing a march on the good lady, as well as on the good lady's very blue-black garments, which, I dare warrant, had but indis-

tinct recollection of the *maison de deuil*, where, without form and void, they reposed some dozen years previous to the opening of my tale.

But, though the outward female was indubitably changed, and muddy, and palsy, and otherwise aged, there was that in Mrs. Lawrence which resisted the fell attacks of Time; that in Mrs. Lawrence which derived even additional vigour from the lapse of years; which had many symptoms of a peculiar and apparently anomalous nature, but which nevertheless set up to be and was Resignation. You never saw a more resigned individual: the very wrinkles on her forehead, between her eyes, round her mouth, in her cheeks, formed themselves into the several letters of that word; and you could read at a glance — Resignation.

I may not be able to show cause for so

remarkable a development of this praiseworthy attribute, but that satisfactory causes existed I have never up to this moment attempted to question. Being a resigned, Mrs. Lawrence was necessarily a religious, person — a little too stern, perhaps, in her piety; but she did not think so herself, and we dare not venture beyond a surmise.

There were born to Mrs. Lawrence, in the days of the defunct Anthony Lawrence, one son and three daughters; these, with an orphan niece, made up the assembly at Lawrenceville, when our acquaintance with that exemplary establishment began.

“Henry, I desire to speak with you in the drawing-room,” enunciated his mother to the indolent youth who represented that male branch of the “world-wide” family of Lawrence, and who, lately returned from a

protracted *harum scarum* tour in the East, had carried home in his person a vast supply of the laziness peculiar to that region, and in his train an Egyptian dragoman, as confidential understrapper, or what you will.

Henry Lawrence was stretched in one of the most approved postures expressed by the word comfortable—a thoroughly Saxon word, by the by, but well understood in the lands of a warmer sun. Hassan was cutting the leaves of a morning newspaper for his master's perusal, and enlivening the after-breakfast digestive half hour, when the above authoritative sentence came in at the door, and called up the young fumigator from his ease and nargileh. He had followed the matron; and was now desired to turn the bolt — an indication of what our hero used to denominate “something hot and strong.”

“You rode out to dinner last evening without leaving any notice, Henry: I must be permitted to inquire the name of your host.”

“Our neighbour, Sir William Price: nothing wrong, I hope?”

“Did I say there was anything wrong?” returned the lady, in that tone of mingled dignity and resignation so individually her own; “now, further, you will mention the company.”

“They were as thick as peas: many of them strangers from town, of whose very names I am ignorant; but of course we had the Longfellows.”

“Of course! You cannot intend me to believe that Mrs. Longfellow, about whose goodness you never cease to trumpet, would actually dine with a large London party of strangers.”

“Mrs. Longfellow was *there*,” resumed Henry, without attempting to reconcile his mother’s repugnance to the fact; “and along with her Miss Burton.....”

“Poor, worldly-minded, besotted, plain fool!” ejaculated the responsive voice maternal, with a pause after each adjective more deprecatory than compassionate.

“Wellesly Sandys and his sister; Mrs. and two Misses Montgomery.....”

“Mrs. Montgomery again!” interrupted Mrs. Lawrence, who was peculiarly bitter towards people of her own growth and cloth; “why, her poor husband is scarcely cold! — I’m sure, I wonder what widows will come to!”

“To a cozy dinner-party now and then, if invited,” was the answer, too sly to be filial; “and as for Lionel Montgomery’s cooling process, *it* must be gradual indeed,

or *he* caloric: why you forget he is three years dead."

"Thank you, Henry Lawrence: old as I am, and feeble as I am, my recollection has not failed me hitherto: and I may not be laid in the grave so soon as you seem to anticipate. Forget that brutal, profligate, broken down....."

"There now, mamma, that will do," interrupted Henry.

But she went on eloquently: "You will tell me next that my teeth are gone, and I cannot articulate: that will be the next impertinence, I suppose."

"Oh dear, no! every day and hour belie *that*," thought the defendant; who, having learned that "a soft answer turneth away wrath," merely expressed sorrow for his unintentional levity.

"Hem!" from the resigned interlocutor,

indicative of victory : “ I must obtain your promise, Henry, not on any account to accept these invitations to godless entertainments during the period of mourning for my sister. This is due to *myself*”—a material point at all times with Mrs. Lawrence. “ Your aunt’s solicitor writes a very startling letter to my address this morning, informing me that the great mass of Penelope’s fortune—indeed, the whole of it, saving some legacies to menials—has been willed to hospitals, charities, and schools: not a word about Hélena; not so much as an acknowledgment of her services; and she, who was more than a slave to the irritable, old, selfish creature, who never, even during the holidays, was permitted to visit her home and widowed parent, but must gad about with her shameless relative to operas, theatres, and other infamous gatherings, will be now sent pen-

niless to her family; with her head full of evil thoughts, her heart steeled against the only true pleasures, the only real happiness, and her necessities demanding an additional sacrifice from *me!*”

Oh, had you but seen this heap of craped Resignation in a fume!

“My dear mother,” replied Henry, “you cannot wish me to understand that, because Hélena is disappointed in the contents of Aunt Penelope’s will, she forgets the extreme liberality which, ever since she was ten years old, educated, guarded, fondled her. My aunt was aware, no doubt, that with *your* fortune her niece would be richly provided for; and we cannot fully do justice to that unselfish generosity which prompted her to remember the really needy and the poor: Hélena will be all the more natural, the more loveable, because she comes not

surrounded by that conscious importance, that moneyed arrogance, so often attendant upon great wealth, which only renders its possessor insufferable to others: as to her head being turned by the gaiety to which she was so long accustomed, I must beg to differ with you; indeed, I only wish Elinor and Susan might have a share of it: it could not either injure or corrupt them.”

“Indeed! very fine! and so you take upon yourself to overrule *my* decision! — I am amazed at your hardihood! You attempt to reprimand your mother, to gainsay *her* opinions, to introduce your monstrous absurdities, and actually to defend my benighted sister from that well-earned reprobation which her insane and unchristian conduct deserve!”

“Insane! *no*, mamma; and unchristian still less!” hotly retorted young Lawrence,

who had a very tender recollection of Aunt Penelope's parties.

“Leave the room instantly, sir! I am ashamed to call you son of mine: you are a disgrace to the mother who reared you! I will not submit.....”

But, in strict conformity with her injunction, Master Henry had retired, and closed the door upon her threats.

Mrs. Lawrence, however, not quite exhausted, immediately gave chase to the ill-starred refugee, who, reinstated before the library-fire, was about to resume that comfort-bringing pastime which the swarthy Hassan kneeled to prepare.

“Desist in my presence, menial! and do you, stubborn profligate, hold yourself in readiness for a speedy journey to London: I am resolved to remove Hélena from that contagious atmosphere as soon as may be,

and I require her presence under your protection at Lawrenceville this night. Carry this pamphlet to her, for her careful consideration; she will read it in the train, and must be prepared to undergo a minute examination on its contents when she arrives. You may inform her that its pages present a summary of that line of conduct which, in unison with her sister and cousin, she will adopt under my eye."

Saying which, the matron shut herself out with a very uncompromising bang of the door.

Henry immediately rang the bell for Hassan, who had skulked away in fear and trembling, after encountering the stern glance of those authoritative albeit gray and red-rimmed sparklers, which, without lashes to subdue, or brows to characterize them, stood boldly forth on either side of a

very needle-pointed nose, like Mounts Vesuvius and Etna, to the right and left of Messina's Strait—only more fiery, and in perpetual eruption. No wonder poor Hassan was cowed!

“Order the horses, and prepare my carriage valise: I shall start for London in an hour.”

Hassan flew to obey, while Henry hid his features in fragrant clouds.

CHAPTER II.

We shall be now at leisure to introduce our intelligent reader to a breakfast party at Sir William Price's magnificent residence, on the morning identical with Mrs. Lawrence's lecture, and subsequent to that dinner which called forth the charitable comments we have attempted to record.

Sir William was rather a curiosity—what some people term a character: years had made him bald and fifty; inclination led him to prefer the life of a bachelor, and of a jolly one, and fortune presented him with many thousands a year, to make ducks and drakes of, as it is said. Now, it just so

happens that a poultry-yard was one of his particular hobbies, and therefore the saw has double force in application to the master of Bridlestone.

Sir William had a remarkably funny old sister — funny is the very word for her — who always lived at her brother's country-house, was a spinster, considerably more advanced in age than he, and the very kindest antique you can imagine. Though as bald as a globe, she despised the artificial conceptions of the *peruquier*, and would none of those flowery designs which French fingers and fancy weave into gardens for the head. Miss Price, therefore, had an amusing effect on a first, which certainly did not abate on a more intimate, acquaintance. She was tall and slender, as upright as the backboard maiden of sixteen, and wore a stereotyped smile, which, I dare ven-

ture, never played truant, even in the night-watches.

Sir William, this lady, and some thirteen or fourteen guests, were discussing hot rolls and the events of the preceding entertainment.

“My sister Lucy absolutely *raves* about Henry Lawrence’s musical powers: nay, you called him superior to Mario; pray, Sir William, do you agree to such palpable flattery?”

“I—I—’pon my life, I don’t know—Miss Price, do you think this is Boadicea’s egg? It’s not marked, you see, after all I have said.”

“I can never get James to remember,” returned the slender old maid, in tones of simpering despair; “he has positively no intellectual faculty in perfection! but, my darling Willy, I think it is more the colour

of Cleopatra's produce, light brown, with a polish."

"Then I cannot attempt it; Cleopatra is too flavoured for me, a great deal. You see I'm rather particular, Mrs. Montgomery: perhaps you don't think so, but I am."

Mrs. Montgomery *did* think so, but deemed it advisable to say—"Oh dear no."

"I have a strong inclination to believe," resumed the Baronet, "what my tutor was often at pains to establish in the days gone by, when *you*, my dear madam, were a blooming lassie of nineteen or twenty: he used to argue that..."

"Pray, Sir William, do not associate *me* with the antediluvians; I have no recollection of grandeval occurrences, I assure you. It is quite evident that you make a mistake—don't you think so, Miss Price?"

"My brother is pretty accurate as to

dates, Mrs. Montgomery," replied the simple lady, who was expected to take another view of the subject, but who only made matters worse.

"Now, mamma, do let us hear Sir William's doctrine," interposed Fanny, determined to get rid of the *embarras* which her less dispassionate parent had called into action, but knew not how to quell. "You were speaking of your tutor, I think, Sir William?"

"Oh yes, dear! Dr. Wall considered that, with respect to our animal food, we are by no means sufficiently careful in ascertaining the disposition or habits of the victim, whether fish, flesh, or fowl, previous to making it our sustenance. He believed, and I think justly, that the consumer is inoculated, so to speak, with the peculiarities of the consumed, whatever they may be;

that, in fact, were you to partake of a vicious animal, a corresponding effect would be produced on your character; whereas, were you to dine on a silly or stubborn chicken, your conduct would subsequently be tinted with puerility or wilfulness: now, I have a very accurate knowledge of the dispositions of my laying hens, and, while I avoid Cleopatra's egg as containing a pugnacious juice, I enjoy Boadicea's, as being the production of a magnanimous and gentle fowl."

There was a strong risible tendency observable throughout Sir William's audience, when this alimantal problem reached them, Miss Price being the only lady who did not apply to her teacup for temporary concealment. No other effect was produced on *her* than a rather more reverential exhibition of the wonted smile.

“Then, from this day forward,” began young Sandys, with a comic gravity of emphasis, “I will make my butcher chargeable with every fit of the spleen, and fault, and folly, of which I am thus the unconscious and uncensurable exponent.” Then, changing his tone, “But, dear me, Mrs. Montgomery, on this principle you must have sipped some claret last night of the Methusalem vintage. I see, by Miss Fanny’s eyes, she can explain, and I refer you to her.”

“Sure, *I* know!” dashed in Norah Burton, a complete specimen of the unsophisticated, brogue-perpetrating, blundering Milesian, “Sure *I* know, and I’ll tell ye. It’s just because you were so mightily flustered about your *own* age, a while ago.”

The object of this unguarded sally looked, not daggers, but knives and forks, as being

procurable, at her assailant, who continued her breakfast in blissful ignorance of her native *bouhomie*.

“Clara,” whispered Fanny to her sister, “you can easily guess what Norah was helped to lately?”

“No!—what?”

“Why, goose, to be sure!”

“And Lucy to lamb, she looks so meek,” returned Clara.

“Ah! not innocent enough, I fear,” from the uncharitable Fan.

“Lucy,” began young Sandys, quite too distinctly for her taste, “why did I hear Henry Lawrence recommend lobster-salad, of all unsentimental things, to your notice yesterday? Come, now, explain, on this new system!”

“The fact of its having been tempting is explanation enough, I fancy,” returned

Lucy, with a slight flush, and bold effort to seem careless and composed.

“No, no!—you could tell, if you chose—could she not, Miss Burton?”

“That she could, right well!” cried our Irish friend. “Sure, there’s a lady in a lobster, and maybe Mr. Lawrence hadn’t a lady in his head when he was talking to *you*. Now, Lucy, my darlin’, speak up another time!”

The titter was general, and her blushes but prolonged it.

Let us here describe the Sandys. First, Wellesly, who is older than his sister by a year, though not by any means so sage and staid. Arrived at man’s estate—the only estate to which he might aspire—he is still a bantling; that good-enough, good-for-nothing sort of youth, that medley of good spirits, good parts, bad chances, and empty pocket, for which no asylum has hitherto

been projected, but which, if frequency may give a claim, should have had one long ago. Defeated in obtaining an East Indian appointment, he found himself, at the age of two-and-twenty, without any prospect of employment; dissuaded from our leading professions by the discernment of his friends, too poor to carry out the character of gentleman at large, and, by the force of circumstances, about to be merged into that despicable anomaly, though common nuisance, a social Issachar, a something between boon companion, dependent, and sponge.

Yet Wellesly, foreseeing this future in its sombrest and most repulsive light, set himself to struggle against it. He looked into his own head as to its capabilities, and endeavoured, with more or less success, to discard Vanity. Thus, albeit occasionally precipitate in his conclusions, and too san-

guine a vast deal, he was by no means blind to his own defects. How to remedy and triumph over these—*that* was the difficulty, and there was he likely to fail.

He had Genius, his Aunt Ernestine assured him: it was Genius, however, of that undeveloped, abeyant kind, that the wonder is how she made it out at all, and which, if not roused and fed, will sleep its vitality away. He would have nursed it an he knew how, experimentalized in poetry largely, wore loose collars and clammy locks, and tried to look mad: still no visible effect. At last, on the verge of listless desperation—far the most deep though not the most violent kind—he took to hoping that some fine morning this dormant gift of his would create a diversion in his favour; but of what nature or whence he had never the courage to inquire.

It sufficed, did that pleasing illusion, to send him comfortably to sleep, night after night, for a long time, and to realize his heart's fondest hope in dreams: no matter that the morn scouted his fancies, that the waking mocked him as it had mocked Alraschar: the spell worked its charm over half of the twenty-four hours! Occasionally, he had—who has *not* had?—his day-dreams too; would steal out into the woods, and, hurrying to some Elfin-haunted spot where the herdboy could not peer, would sit down on the flickering moss, and beatify his loneliness with glorious wonders. But in this case the reaction was fearful: the return to things *as they were* from things *as he made them*, oh, it was sure precursor of a terrible fit of the blues!

We must pass on. The Baronet and Miss Price are his especial patrons—patrons is

not the word—friends. Sir William—ever at work to steady him, as he says—would long ago have urged his preparing for the Bar or Church, would have in fact supported him in a profession, until he was able to stand alone; but that to neither of those pursuits had Wellesly, he believed, a call. They required unflagging, plodding perseverance; and the Baronet, without censuring what he perceived was most a constitutional defect, held back from encouraging the delicate, sensitive, eager, but not particularly astute stripling to risk health and even reputation in a conflict so unsuitable, which must prove, he felt, distasteful, and therefore vain.

As for the army, “No,” thought Sir William—and, like most men, without a baker’s dozen of children, he had some little peculiarities of opinion — “Sandys is too good

for that; he would be thrown away; too easily led—he would be lost.”

But there are irons in the fire! We should mention here that Wellesly and Lucy are orphans; their father, a halfpay officer, having died when they were babies, and their mother, a schoolfellow, and through life a close friend of Miss Price, soon after. They have an aunt, a mysterious, unmarried woman, whose small fortune suffices to offer head-quarters and welcome to her orphan relatives, but whose very questionable and unaccountable habits are by no means such as conduce to the respectability of her name.

Aunt Sandys is a remarkably beautiful, more correctly a dashing woman, some six years older only than her niece. She is notable for splendid talents and general brilliancy of conversation, but with such irregular, such ill-assorted domestic and per-

sonal peculiarities, that very few among her neighbours care to cultivate her society, and indeed still fewer meet with favour in her eyes. On the other hand, she is familiarly intimate with persons of her own eccentric stamp, and looks upon them as alone deserving of her friendship.

Wellesly, nevertheless, has a certain share of her esteem; because his superior endowments, both physical and mental, assimilate him more closely to herself. She looks upon Lucy as an unpretending, quiet, innocent girl, "with nothing in her," as she says; and indeed, excepting the last qualification, which is by far too strong, she quite answers the description.

How shall we present a correct likeness of Lucy Sandys? She is pale and tall, placid and reserved, with the mildest eyes and smoothest forehead, the most dispas-

sionate aspect, collected manner, and a general air of benignity and rectitude which distinguishes her from the *ὅι πολλοί* of her time of life, and rivets, if not a first sight admiration, on more intimate knowledge, the fullest esteem. She is pretty, blue-eyed, and slender; and undeniably a very creditable approach to virtuous perfection; a little too cold, perhaps, too solemn, too prematurely sage; but it is well for the excitable, impulsive Wellesly that such a monitress trips by his side!

The Prices delight in these youngsters, and consider them residuary guests, who are to come when they choose, stay while they choose, and never go away without leave: of which bountiful hospitality the Sandys are not loth to avail themselves; their other alternative being Aunt Ernestine's villa at Fulham.

Meantime, breakfast has been got over, and sundry of the visitors betake them to preparations for departure. Sir William, having grasped his walking-stick, has gone into the poultry-yard for morning inspection; Miss Price is closeted with the *chef de cuisine* on a commissariat consultation; and young Sandys, who has a *furore* for exotics, is traversing the conservatory with Mrs. Longfellow and his sister. The Montgomeries remain at Bridlestone, on a visit of three weeks longer, and Sir William expects an inroad of fresh company, with much consequent gaiety.

Fanny and Clara are fine, stylish teensters, *too* charming rather, but full of spirits, and bristling with accomplishments. Their fortunes being small, Mrs. Montgomery will be happy to negotiate with persons of capital: some thousands a year and a

title would be carefully attended to—but, of course, this by the way. Fanny, the elder, has a faultless figure, and her features, though not regular, are winsome: good hair, teeth, and eyes, go a great way, and she can boast them in perfection. Clara sets up for a feminine beauty, a modern Hebe, being fair and bloomy: she has a habit, too, of talking to you with downcast eyelids, which is so artless, and timid, and interesting! Mamma Montgomery is a show-bird, of the decoy-duck species; wears massive tresses, carmine cheeks, glittering ivory, patches, jewels, feathers, all the exhibitory paraphernalia. Her play, however, is totally devoid of selfishness; every manœuvre being directed towards the young ladies' "settlement," by which she means marriage, we opine.

“Fanny’s singing, Clara’s retiring dis-

position, *her* girls' shiness —" as if *they* were the only shy girls in the world—"their humility: she really cannot get them to pay the commonest attention to dress;" when they are spangling with the choicest efforts of the *modiste*. "Fanny *won't* conform to the long-skirted style: only do look at her ridiculously short tails"—to rivet attention on the artless creature's Chinese feet—and "both would look so vastly better in high-up bodies—don't you think so?"—to advertize their snowy necks and somewhat unprotected bosoms. Mamma Montgomery, however, being like the generality of her kind, transparent, is harmless.

We will join the conservatory loungers, reinforced in our absence by Norah Burton. Norah, pock-pitted and plain, but honest and natural, is the only daughter of a broken-down Irish squire, whose last days are

rapidly running out in Australia. Deserted by her worthless parent, she was taken to Mrs. Longfellow's heart, the invalid, her husband, being cousin to the Squire, and, in the absence of any children of his own, lavishing every tenderness on the rustic orphan child.

Mrs. Longfellow, in the waning time of life, when the grey hairs mingle with the black, has still those bright benevolent eyes, that healthy cheek, and that cheerful, unaffected manner, which throw around her very atmosphere and presence a charm too often wanting in the younger and more fair. She is one of those for whom the gates of heaven will, without a question, open wide. The friend of the poor, the comforter of the distressed, her heart warm enough and large enough for others' grief as well as for her own, and

whose very voice is comfort, welcome, and hospitality.

Mr. Longfellow was a man of immense wealth, acquired in the Colonies; in heaping up riches, however, he had lost that chiefest blessing—health; and came home with a constitution enfeebled beyond reclaim. He married, had no family, and gradually sank into second childhood: we find him a weary, helpless burden, and, with his wife—who is a sister of Sir William Price,—and Norah, a resident at Bridlestone.

CHAPTER III.

It was the year's early spring-time, that jocund, odorous, hopeful season! Outside, the snow had ceased to fall, and the red-breast no longer made a moping bundle of himself, like a mendicant impostor, at the window. Inside, the morning fire was seldom courted, and a sensible improvement in ladies' finger-tips and noses took place.

In the conservatory, Summer held untempered sway. Here, geraniums, azaleas, myrtles, orange-trees, roses, and a host of brilliant bloomers, kept up all the state and splendour of the pet days of June; while

tulips, hyacinths, and the lily of the valley contended for a predominant beauty for scented May.

Wellesly pointed his sister to a snowy camellia. "This is most like *you*, Lucy, of all the bright things round us. I see a likeness to somebody in every flower—look at yonder group of dazzling rhododendra: might they not be mistaken for the Montgomery triad? while the amaryllis....."

"Not so severe, master; draw your *own* portrait in this humour, an't please you, but spare your neighbours."

"Oh, here's mine, to the very life, too," pointing to a picotee.

"Why, there are no blossoms on it, it is budding only?" returned Lucy, in surprise.

"Well, and so am I, dearest: an immature, although a promising plant; at present

but a pitiful idler, about to be a pink of no ordinary perfection!"

"Not altogether a conceit, I would gladly believe," said his sister, earnestly; "and I shall watch your progress, as typified in this chosen emblem's future, with superstitious interest, remember!"

But Wellesly's eyes were rivetted on Norah Burton, who, in a corner where a glaring sunflower by some strange chance had been permitted to raise its vulgar, sickly face, stood deep in admiration, occasionally patting the yellow monster in a most appreciating way, and stooping to paint her more than *retroussé* nose upon its surface with fervour.

"Behold!" whispered Wellesly. "Aunt Ernestine would be in raptures with such singularity, and Miss Burton sure of her patronage ever after."

“Norah is not handsome enough for Aunt Ernestine,” replied Lucy calmly; when the object of their converse, looking round, flew rapturously to meet them, sweeping off a hundred tulips’ heads in her transit.

“Oh, do come, Lucy dear, and see such a delightful sunflower!”

“Oh yes, do come!” echoed young Sandys.

“No such thing, you rogue; I won’t have you snubbing my favourite, at all!” cried Norah, thereby interdicting his presence.

In obedience, the young man turned to join Mrs. Longfellow, who was making up a *bouquet* of rose-buds for an offering to her bed-ridden husband.

“Only think, Mrs. Longfellow, Miss Burton’s Irish taste has singled out a huge

sunflower as the finest thing in the whole collection!"

"It is certainly a *bright* fancy," she replied, and then changed the subject. "Lucy and myself have arranged to drive over to Lawrenceville some day for a morning call; will you," she inquired "be our cavalier?"

"Any where, with either or both of you; with a proviso that you shelter me from the recluse, whom I fear as children do ghosts."

"Oh, certainly; she will be my care, while you may devote your attentions to the girls. If Henry is at home, I am under orders from Sir William to bring him to Bridlestone for dinner. His sisters, he says, are never allowed to go out, and seem, poor things, to be strangely cared for.

"From my heart I pity them," returned

Wellesly, "especially Susan, who is, or would be, pretty."

"Then the pretty alone receive *your* commiseration!" said Mrs. Longfellow, somewhat amused; and continued—"there is a much greater beauty than Susan in the family, though not at Lawrenceville—the youngest daughter, Hélena, who lived with her aunt. But by the by, Miss Penelope Lawrence is dead—I had quite forgotten it—and Hélena will most likely have returned home: you may see *her*, possibly, you butterfly boy!"

"I confess to be a bigotted worshipper of beauty," interrupted the bantered Wellesly, defensively.

"Although not constant in your devotions to any one shrine," persisted his companion.

"Well, well, I give it up; only tell me, Mrs. Longfellow," he added, "how will

this dainty creature, this idol, no doubt, of fashion, adapt herself, ever, to that strangely miserable disciplinarian, her impracticable mother? She must mope and fret to death at Lawrenceville."

"Oh, she is her aunt's heiress, of course, and thus her own mistress, quite independent of Mrs. Lawrence, to whom her visit is not likely to be a prolonged one, though, even during those first days of mourning, she will find much in their stern and morbid mockery of Christian life to chill and estrange her."

"Is she clever?" asked Sandys.

"Very clever, and well educated, I'm told."

"You positively make me love her by hearsay," returned the youth warmly: "she tallies so precisely with my matrimonial standard, that I only wish..." he hesitated.

"Perhaps," suggested Mrs. Longfellow,

“you are happier without your wish : things are always for the best; and Hélena, although everything I have said, might make an indifferent wife.”

Sandys sighed, and turned the conversation. “ See, here come Miss Burton and Lucy : pray quiz the Irish girl about her sunflower !”

“ Quizzing, Wellesly, is a dangerous thing !” returned the good old lady, with a mock reproving frown.

“ Oh, Miss Burton,” persisted the tiresome fellow, “ I do so idolize sunflowers ?”

“ All over the left, my dear. *I* know you !” answered Norah, with more point than elegance.

“ Come, my dear Norah,” interposed the matron, anxious to restrain her un-Anglican charge, “ come with these roses to Mr. Longfellow ; you have not seen him this

morning:" and the Sandys were left to themselves.

No sooner had the sound of retiring steps died away, than Wellesly, laying his arm on his sister's neck, and with a very serious expression, said—"This is a sad, pitiless, unbecoming, undoing life, Lucy, that from youth to age, from day to day, and from hope to hopelessness, I am forced to lead! Scampering over the fields, flirting with the ladies, and devouring good dinners; throwing away my best years: surely, surely, there must be something that I can, should, and must, do!"

"An abrupt change," returned Miss Sandys, "from teasing poor Norah with your irony, to lecturing your poor self for what I scarcely think you are to blame. But what a fluctuating visionary you are: how fondly addicted to mirth, and yet a

melancholy wight all the time! Come," she continued, laying her gentle cheek upon his hand, and kissing its smooth and feminine palm, "come, *courage, mon frère!* I have somewhat of a cheerful nature wherewithal to illumine your Rembrandt sketch, a ray to pierce its murky gloom; a ray, bear in mind, that may presently disappear, and not by any means to be too fondly trusted, but which also, on the other hand, may be the precursor of sunshine. Are you prepared," she went on, with great emphasis, "to receive good tidings, and yet, should disappointment prove it premature, to battle manfully against your fate?—come now, Wellesly!"

"I will so endeavour, now help me every good intention!" returned, with much energy, her brother.

"Well," she resumed, "perhaps I am

precipitate, at this early and most uncertain stage, to waken any hopes in your too hopeful breast; but, relying on your promise, and confiding in your best efforts to observe it, I shall proceed to my revelation, premising that, if things turn out as we desire, your moping days are over. Do you remember—but of course you do—the large Christmas party of grandees assembled here two years ago?”

“Oh, yes, perfectly,” was his ready answer: “we had the Sainsons, General and Mrs. Lamert, Lord Templeton and his sister, Sir Geoffry and Lady Hamlyn.....”

“Stop—it is with these last we have to do,” interposed Lucy; then adding, “Sir Geoffry Hamlyn is gazetted to the Governorship of C——, part of our Eastern empire, and Sir William has written to him—he being abroad somewhere on the Continent

—to solicit for *you*, my dear Wellesly, the situation of his private secretary; a reply should be received in another week, and if favourable.....”

“Oh, soul of my soul, say no more!” quickly broke in the stripling; then flinging his arms round his sister’s neck, he cried, amid a volley of kisses and other endearments, “I shall *try* not to go stark staring mad for the next seven days: indeed I shall, my good angel! I will do my very utmost to keep within bounds for *your* sake: but only to think of that darling, admirable, unapproachable Sir William — the world of happiness to which he is providing me with a pass — the good things which are yet in store for me — ay, for me, Wellesly Sandys, but lately on the verge of suicide.....”

“Hush! hush! don’t say so, even in jest!”

from his monitress, with an additional loving pressure.

“And now, with a foot in the promised land!” he continued, not heeding, scarce hearing, her check—“kiss me, thus and thus, my sweet Lucy; the clouds are driven away at last, and a day has come of such bright and gorgeous rising.....”

“That the chances of its setting at once and for ever are quite discarded by your not over-reasonable fancy.”

“Pooh! Lucy, you always wear spectacles. I know that the chances are equal, quite well; but, in the event of my services being required—oh, dear, dear, will it *not* be glorious! Those dreamy Eastern lands, with their scenes of fabled and natural enchantment, those nurseries of the arts, the foci of creation, of Paradise, of eternal summer —

‘Where a leaf never dies in the still blooming bowers,
And the bee banquets on through a whole year of flowers—
Where simply to feel that we breathe, that we live,
Is worth the best joy that Life elsewhere can give!’

Just bethink you, Lucy—one endless June,
unvarying verdure, teeming with fruits and
flowers, reeking with perfume; no nipping
frosts, or tedious nights, but sunshine bright
and cloudless—

‘So darkly, deeply, beautifully blue,
That God alone *is* to be seen in heaven.’

Picture to yourself the brilliancy of scenes
like these, where even darkness is made
visible by the myriad lamps of fireflies
clustering on every forest tree!”

“Pray find a place in your Eden for the
mosquitoes,” interposed his monitress, with
sarcastic gravity; “moreover, a thermo-
meter at 120° in the shade; white ants to
gnaw your couch from under you in a single
night, or to have stormed your wardrobe

during your slumbers; the absolute certainty of scorpions in your boots, snakes under your pillow and up your coat sleeves; centipedes inspecting your throat, tarantula spiders, with legs like greyhounds and fangs like lobsters, dropping into your mouth from the ceiling, and a perfect host of other oriental luxuries!"

"Why, Lucy, you seem to delight in the gloomy side of the picture invariably," replied her companion, somewhat subdued by her category of evils. "Now, *my* course is to steer through the smoothest and most picturesque waters....."

"But which proves the safer course in the end? *which* escapes stranding or shipwreck? tell me."

"Why," unwillingly agreed the youth, "inasmuch as you run no danger, your voyage is the more successful, I allow, and

any disappointment you encounter must necessarily be of a pleasing kind; but.....”

“ But,” continued Lucy, interrupting him, “you promise to restrain your too exultant confidence, until certainty shall have placed it beyond the chance of defeat: now, do gratify your friends, and serve your own interests, by restraining for the nonce this impetuous, short-sighted, inflated hope! Yet another word: I have prepared Sir William and Miss Price for our departure to-morrow or next day. We will visit Aunt Ernestine during the interval which must elapse before your destiny can be decided. *She* is to know nothing about the affair at present, and nothing hereafter, if the result should bring no change: but it will be better for all parties that the decision reach you where no knowledge of the negotiation exists. Now, Wellesly dear, I am sure you will *try*

to conform, for this brief period, to the strict acceptation of that theatrical and expressive word, 'mum.' ”

Taking the soft hand, which rested ungloved on his arm, the embryo official eloquently pressed it to his lips, thus sealing the compact with a kiss that seemed to signify, “ Anything to please you, Lucy! *if I can.* ”

They rose and Miss Sandys, leaning on her brother, turned to re-enter the house.

CHAPTER IV.

Hélène Lawrence was truly an attractive girl: with physical and mental advantages of no common order, both of which had been furbished into the highest and brightest polish, she quite outshone all the planets of her sphere. Her aunt, a conceited, but, upon the whole, a good woman—as women go — had been smitten, some years previously to our present date, by the extreme beauty of her eyes, and intense yet refined vivacity of her conversation.

That old body, Miss Penelope Lawrence, somewhere about sixty, even then looked

upon herself—and many spinsters of her *uncertain* age do the same—as still marriageable. Up to this time, her whole life had been *a suffusion*, from an internal conviction that delicacy and decorum were continually sacrificed to the fatality which sent her into the world without a twin, and into society without a chaperon. Though apparently of a sufficiently matured organization, her intellectual, or inner woman, still “warm and young,” continued a martyr to the coyness, shiness, girlish diffidence, and ticklishness, which, except in cases of extreme sensibility, seldom outlive twenty-one.

It was with eminent satisfaction, therefore, that, casting her timid eye over her sister’s vineyard, Miss Pen—as her intimates called her—beheld the stately, graceful Hélena, growing up into something

which must fascinate every gaze, but something which ran no chance of eclipsing Miss Pen's own peerless, though hitherto solitary star. She compared, internally, herself and her niece to a pair of cream-coloured, thorough-bred ponies, of equal beauty, and which in double harness would give the go-by to all.

I will not positively affirm, albeit I think it highly probable, that Pen, during her visit to Lawrenceville—a visit she was at no pains to prolong—made up her mind to have a double wedding solemnized at St. George's, Hanover Square, within a year from that date. Circumstances, to be sure, changed her purpose, or, more correctly, deferred it, inducing her to retain for a season her virgin innocence and unprotected position; but such a course was adopted, with the express design of training the

somewhat rustic filly at a fashionable breaker's establishment in London, where singing masters, dancing, drawing, and other polite professors, together with back-boards, and the Opera on Saturday evening, gave a finish to natural charms which was deemed essential for her match, by Miss Pen, to complete their similitude.

"Penelope," said Mrs. Lawrence, who was much too *proper* to abbreviate, especially on so weighty a topic as that under discussion, "after deep self-examination"—what use it could possibly be we need not fathom—"after an entire week of unexceptional sleeplessness—after"—here Mrs. Lawrence halted to take breath; at least, so she made believe, though Miss Pen attributed it to dearth of ideas.

"She is coining, now," thought Pen.

"After application to the highest autho-

rity, I have adopted the resolution to bid Hélena go with you:" then, sucking her lips, to represent tears, she continued—"It will break the child's heart; I myself shall never survive it: but what is ordained is ordained, is"—gasped the widow, bringing all the resignation wrinkles into force—"ordained!" and her tattered kerchief wiped away whole deluges of burning, blistering, maternal droppings, which never came.

"Moonshine!" cried Pen, as she turned her back on the self-sacrificing, devoted parent, and surveyed her own delicate lap-pets in the mirror. "As to its breaking the child's heart, I consulted the child's self, and derived therefrom a different assurance: as to its deadly effect on *you*, I think you over-estimate the danger: as to the week's sleeplessness—moonshine!"

So said, somewhat waspishly, Miss Pen, and sat down to write to her housekeeper. She was not to be hoodwinked, even by that ordinarily telling display of resignation. Having some knowledge of her sister, she could not help feeling that, so far from entertaining genuine sentiments of grief for her daughter's removal, Mrs. Lawrence consoled herself with the idea—in *her* case, at all times a main one—that, by the march of time, some portion of the aunt's mantle might descend upon the niece. To be sure, in a catechetical point of view, the matron very probably *may* have experienced a qualm; for Calvinism and Mammon waged frequent war in her economic breast: but the result was never doubtful—Mammon, on any terms, was allowed to win; although, if practicable, a compromise would be effected between them.

It was evident, however, that in the present case, no temporizing could be resorted to, Miss Pen being too cheerful and independent for *that*. So Mrs. Lawrence, rather than lose the probable reversion of certain estates for her darling child, gave in. This, one might suppose, was worldly wisdom, but for the fact that Lawrenceville ignored the world.

To return. Two beds were to be aired in No. —, Wimpole Street, against the ensuing night. Breakfast over, Miss Pen and her match left Lawrenceville, followed to the threshold by Mrs. Lawrence and her sympathetic *mouchoir*. Just as the carriage moved away, that widow was seen to rush wildly to the front, no doubt with a view to embrace for the last time her nestling—although the effect produced by her display on the footman, who was last to

mount, and therefore most exposed to her charge, was such as to warrant the belief that her lamentations were intended for him.

“ Oh, it’s all very well, mum,” muttered Smith, with an evasive wave of the hand, “ but yer too mooch of a skinflint, to make it nat’ral!”

Smith had probably been restricted in rations. Miss Pen, observing the attack, returned to her allegory, “ Moonshine!” then, spreading her parasol in defiance, was gone.

Scarcely had the sound of retiring wheels died into extreme distance, when the inconsolable and bereaved mother sank into her fireside easy chair, and, with a very emphatic “ Thank God!” stowed her kerchief and grief away.

Henry Lawrence, then about sixteen,

looked up from a letter which he was inditing to a schoolfellow.

“What do you mean, mamma?” he asked, with much surprise.

“Oh, nothing, dear.”

Presently, however, it came out, in spite of her: indeed, she was much too happy to contain herself as she should have done, if she desired, that is, to pass for a *sincere* Christian. Some minutes elapsed, and Henry was sealing his note. Mrs. Lawrence resumed—

“A fine thing for your sister, my dear—a very fine thing.”

“Which sister, mamma, and what?” questioned the heir.

“Why, Hélena, of course: the best thing that could have befallen her.”

“You mean her trip to London, I presume—yet,” he added, with some caution,

"I thought you were averse to the arrangement. Nay, I'm almost certain I heard you say so."

"Well," began his mother, biting, "and if I *did*, is it necessary to cast it in my teeth? You're a fool to suppose I *meant* it, that's all. Your aunt has a large fortune!"

And this was thrown out by way of suggestive *quietus*.

"I am amazed to hear such fast and loose doctrines," replied her son, "from *you*, of all people in the world. You mean to tell me that, while Aunt Pen was led to believe you disliked her proposal, you were secretly delighted all the time?"

"Pre—cise—ly!" articulated the widow, with as much weight of brass as seemed necessary to drive her system down his throat.

And Henry was certainly astounded: a

new light began to pour in upon and illumine for his inspection very many strokes of maternal diplomacy which hitherto he had never dared to scan.

We have said, we hope that Mrs. Lawrence was a religious woman: yet, no one being a hero to his *valet-de-chambre*, it is a question if her severe, sonorous piety took much effect on the filial organ of veneration, or *gullibility*, subsequent to the above incident, which supplied the key, as it were, to much domestic manœuvring, past, present, and prospective.

Out of her own door, indeed, Mrs. Lawrence long ranked as an exemplary A 1 Christian — a little too unrelenting, *too copper-fastened*, perhaps, but all the more in earnest. The village congregation held her in becoming awe, as she headed her drove into church, and sailed, with the air

of a superior saint and much solemnity, up the middle aisle into her pew. Blake, the curate, showed the white feather, if she arrived late, suffered from periodical twitchings through the Liturgy, and, quite running away from his subject, repeated the responses for very terror.

Poor young man! no doubt he was occasionally troubled with night-mare, and that the fiend which sat upon his chest and sucked his breath was our commanding acquaintance, robed in her shabby, rusty crape! For Mrs. Lawrence was a sloven, and on principle, in matters of dress. No cotter's wife on her estate but came to prayers in more reputable 'tire; but, as the matron abhorred expenditure, decried the faintest approach to fashion, and fortified her obstinacy behind a text about taking no thought, &c., the case was hopeless.

“Did you hear what Betty told mamma about the cook?” asked Susan Lawrence of her elder sister, as they stood, each at a separate window in the drawing-room, looking with a vacant, long-continued stare, at the grass, or the gravel, the atmosphere, or nothing at all.

This was a very common, and the only, entertainment with these young ladies; while their conversation, having no other subject from which to originate, bore exclusively on the sayings and doings of their domestics.

Susan was a pretty, thin girl; at least, she would have been pretty, but for that dull, stupid, heavy look, stereotyped by *ennui* and listlessness on her brow. Eleanor was remarkably plain, and wore the same vacant, almost idiotic, want of expression.

“No—tell me,” was her careless answer,

with a yawn, and without relieving her eyes.

“Why, she says the cook saw her cousins on Sunday, after church.”

“Dear me!” was the reply.

And this will serve as a specimen of the kind of thing to which *Hélène* was about to be introduced, with all her polish and tastes, in consequence of her aunt’s demise.

To conclude our sketchy memoir of Miss Pen: she and her juvenile compeer duly arrived in Wimpole Street. *Hélène*, though then only fourteen, appeared, to a stranger, much older. Remarkable for her fine, well proportioned, well developed figure, combining the elasticity of extreme youth with the rounded elegance of twenty, she had quite escaped the unbecoming season of hobbledehoyism. Her hair, gathered loosely into a net, hung low on her beautiful

rounded neck and polished shoulders: it was chesnut hair, though her eyebrows and lashes were dark, and her eyes of that intense grey, which evidences an intellect of no common calibre, a heart whose every chord is tuned to deep and thrilling sensibility. All the features of this face were perfect: the nose, Grecian in *contour*, finely chiselled, and smooth and close, like those we have seen on cameos; the forehead high, and even as the surface of a billiard ball; the cheeks neither roseate nor pale, and answering to the slightest whisper of the soul; the mouth small, yet not too buttony, more birdy than buttony, and a thing to be kissed; teeth of the whitest brilliancy, and set in most faultless crescent; chin dimpled; and throat to challenge the Apollo Belvedere: to sum up all—a dainty work of Nature.

No sooner had aunt and niece descended from their britzska, and entered the hall, than the lady's-maid, a bedizened goose, who advanced to welcome "Missis" home, broke out as follows—

"Lor' look kindly on us, iv ever I seen sich a born beauty!"

"Nonsense, Wilson, nonsense; no more of that, if you please," said Miss Pen, not at all annoyed by the abigail's discernment. "Lead the way to Miss Hélena's room, now; it must be near the dinner hour. If you are not fatigued, my dear," she continued, turning to her match, "we will show ourselves at the Opera to-night: I think my dresses will fit you. What do you say?"

"With all my heart, aunt: I shall be delighted."

"Don't call me aunt any more, my love:

that kind of thing sounds too venerable, at my time of life: people might laugh, you know. Call me Missey."

Having said which, Missey indulged in a facetious chuckle, echoed by Hélena and the maid.

CHAPTER V.

“What do you say to a few months’ finishing at Madame Delaine’s establishment, my love?” began Miss Pen, some days subsequently, as herself and her niece sat late at breakfast.

“Whatever you think may conduce to my improvement will meet with no opposition from *me*, Missey,” rejoined Hélena, looking into her patroness’s eyes with sincere affection.

“I am sure of that, my pretty *camarade*; and, while I cannot bear to think of losing you, I must not be selfish enough to appropriate your abilities all to myself: a year’s

residence with *Madame* will accomplish for one so ready and retentive every thing that can be desirable. After that gentlewoman has exerted her utmost to benefit you, we must begin, my dear, to remember that Time brooks no delay, and that beauty even such as ours is evanescent, perishable, fragile; in fact"—and with the following revelation Miss Pen was suffocated in blushes—"we shall consider it our duty to form an alliance each with an individual who may be induced to volunteer his attachment by the merit and on the basis of our charms."

"Surely, Missey, you cannot mean to tell me you are talking of a husband!" returned *Hélène*, laughingly scanning the enterprising spinster.

"I *am*, dear," was that amatory individual's forcible reply.

The younger lady, having unsuccessfully

endeavoured to take the same business-like view of the subject, bethought her of every harrowing and melancholy event which had crossed her path through the meadows of life, thereby to preserve her gravity. But Miss Pen had yet more to unbosom.

“Take another cup of tea, will you, sweetest? I must give you a further insight into my plans.”

“That is, your matrimonial plans, Missey?”

“Yes, Hélena, my hymeneal desiderata,” returned the old lady soberly.

After studying for a moment the arrangement of her rings, she resumed—

“It will be desirable, in selecting from the numerous offers which will undoubtedly beleaguer us, to carry out that principle which prompted me in my choice of *you* for

my companion. We should be companions in *this* as in every particular."

The youngster so addressed was quickly losing all self-command, when Missey, observing it, added—

"I'm afraid you mistake me, dear. I did not mean, we are to have one husband between us"—and with the impropriety of the very idea she was a peony—"but that, if possible, we should show a preference for *brothers*. You understand me now? I have a notion that our pretensions to beauty, and so forth, being pretty nearly on a par, we ought to assimilate as closely as may be, even in the partners of our future lot. Tell me, what do you think, my love?"

Hélène would not have told her what she thought, for the world; but what she did NOT think, she told in lieu.

“Miskey is right, beyond a doubt; but there are difficulties in the way, I fear.”

“Oh, leave me alone for *that*, dear: whilst *you* mature those accomplishments which are necessary to complete our resemblance”—here Missey looked into the silver tea-urn at her features, and, though terribly elongated by its reflection, they seemed to satisfy her as to the merit of her standard—“*I* shall not neglect our common interests: nor, while necessitated once again to venture forth without that protection which at my age and with my appearance is so desirable, will I, through any praiseworthy sense of delicacy, forget for a moment that *brothers* are the objects of my search, as like, you know, as possible: indeed, I should prefer *twins*, myself; it would be still more the thing, dear; for which purpose, I must keep the Siamese in my head.”

Missey concluded her breakfast, and Hélena made a rapid retreat into the window.

Poor Missey is now dead!—an excellent specimen, with all her foibles. So felt her comrade, as she sat, weeping bitterly for the blithe old spirit gone, in the darkened library, once replete with that other cream-coloured pony's capersome neigh. And yet Hélena was no heiress, after all. The fact is, when Missey's *secrétaire* was unlocked, and Missey's will found, it contained testamentary injunctions as follows:—

That, in case Death should overtake her (Missey) during the Continental tour which was in immediate contemplation, as ensuing upon the approaching double marriage—of which Hélena, up to the reading of this same document, knew no more than ourselves—the personal estate was to be

equally divided between her widower and the other twain: but that, in the event of the whole four expiring at the same date—which evidently it was her firm conviction they were fated to do, no doubt from their absolute and perfect similarity, their community in every way—then her goods and chattels, ready money, landed property, every thing, were to found and endow an institution for poor students, *with fellowships for twins*; build a church for the St. Giles's population, a parsonage for its incumbent, schools, &c., &c., &c.; and that in no case was her fortune to descend to her sister Lawrence, whom she stigmatized, in the legatory vellum, as “a ranting, penurious impostor.” Finally, to leave no doubt as to her matrimonial views, it was declared that, should she (Miss Pen) be *prematurely* summoned, and die a spinster, all her effects

were to be disposed of as above. Then came some legacies to the servants, and thus ran her singular will. This brings us to the juncture when Henry fetched Hélena home.

CHAPTER VI.

“ Our weekly examination day, Fanchon, is it not?” asked Violette de Merton of her *bonne*.

“ Mais oui, mon ange!” was that flippant official’s reply.

“ I want to shirk it, Fanchon—that odious, namby-pamby Blake!”

“ Bête, mon Dieu! une veritable bête!” shuddered the *bonne*.

“ How can I manage it, Fanchon?” asked her mistress.

“ Ha!” cried the servant, slapping her forehead, and regarding the ceiling with intense abstraction—“ il m’est venu une idée!”

“Out with it, *vitement*, my life: a ribbon, a robe, if you can save me! Only see how I pant upon this thrilling, soul-working tale: I am sipping the very *crème* of a seduction. Oh, Fanchon, Fanchon, you can’t think how interesting, how delicious! I am all on fire! Must I then, turn away, drum into my head those dull verses, dress myself in that dismal mourning frock, and listen to that horrid, ugly, Irish parson, for an hour? *Mais il ennuie à la mort!*” And she stamped her little uncovered foot in violent dudgeon.

“*C’est vraiment épouvantable, ma’m selle; mais n’avez vous pas un gros rhume, ou un peu de fièvre?—m’entendez vous?*”

“Bravo! the very thing!” cried the spoiled beauty, flinging her plump white arms round the *bonne’s* neck. “*Mille grâces, Fanchon!*”

“ Je vais supplier madame la veuve d'agréer vos excuses,” returned Fanchon, disengaging herself; “ mais quel est votre mal?”

“ Oh, a desperate toothache—on the very verge of distraction.”

Having said which, she lay down indolently to enjoy, in all the semi-realization of a *deshabillé*, that forbidden fruit, the taste for which, in some form or other, is but too natural to every daughter of Eve.

Violette is Mrs. Lawrence's niece, the offspring of a run-away match, which ended in the birth of this girl, the death of her heart-broken mother, the disappearance of her father, and her removal from Normandy to Lawrenceville, under the care of this woman Fanchon; all of which happened some dozen years previous to our introduction.

Mrs. Lawrence, as nearest of kin, undertook—generous being that she was!—the responsible duties of guardian, the Chancellor performing the legal, as she the maternal, share; and Violette's mother's fortune, thus permitted to accumulate, increased, during a long minority, to something very desirable indeed, which in round numbers we shall estimate at ten thousand pounds a-year.

It had happened, however, that the orphan's grandfather, who lived long enough to see her mother die, enjoined in his will that Violette, then a mere child, was to remain a ward of Chancery until, in the fulness of time, she might marry, and give birth to an heir male, when a moderate annuity was to be *her* reward, but the bulk of the property to await her issue's maturity; unless, indeed, she should marry her cousin,

Henry Lawrence, when, heir or no heir, the property was to be hers in full.

This arrangement had been made, doubtless, to protect Violette from any tampering on the part of her French sire, should he ever again appear, as well as to defend the old man's legacy from foreigners in general, for whom he had no esteem.

Upon these data, it is not to be contested that Mrs. Lawrence, with those dim, yet calculating, eyes of hers, desired, and had a right to desire, nothing more eagerly than the quartering of the Lawrence and De Merton arms. She looked on the matter as an *il faut*, a fatality, any resistance to which it was her duty to prevent, that Henry, *her* son, was to marry Violette, *her* niece, and the Chancellor to come handsomely down.

Now, Mrs. Lawrence, when her own in-

terests took the field, had no lack of discernment: she viewed Violette as an amiable ally, but never lost sight of the fact that severe or exacting treatment might render her a foe. The natural bent of the young lady's inclination leading her to do nothing but what she liked, to amuse herself as much as she could, and to avoid every approach to coercion and inconvenience, had, we imagine, but little singularity; and to this *instinct* the old lady implicitly submitted, with her usual display of wrinkled resignation, in all respects save one; and that one, to which she offered upon the whole but a modified resistance, was Violette's religious training.

“Ma'mselle” was allowed to have her own companion—for Fanchon, unfortunately, was more a companion than *bonne*—her own suite of rooms, phaeton, groom,

in fact, a separate establishment; but she never could get her religious instruction out of the *tante's* hands: Mrs. Lawrence met the best-laid schemes with some scriptural quotations, which, if not appropriate, were unanswerable; and so it fell out that the services of the Reverend Anthony Blake, the curate aforesaid, were in weekly requisition at Lawrenceville, when the son—if he was at home—daughters, and niece—who always were—submitted to a catechetical ordeal of grim severity, under the immediate inspection of widow Lawrence herself.

That hebdomadal solemnity was dreadful; dreadful even to its clerical exponent. Indeed, he appeared more nervous about it than any of them: at each lesson's expiration, Anthony drew breath, and yet, week after week, a terrible fascination bore

him up the gloomy avenue, in spite of himself. The fact is, Mrs. Lawrence's superior sanctity cowed saint and sinner, Anthony and Fanchon, alike: there was no reasoning with or against her; you had just to grin and bear.

I am sorry, at the close of my notice of this laudable attribute in the widow's character, that mention cannot be omitted of an impression which was current in her household, and at which I briefly hinted, in an earlier page: children and servants—nay, further, the awe-stricken padre himself—were occasionally tempted so far to misconstrue their great example's lofty piety, as to hazard, in the keeping of their several consciences, that duosyllabic censure, "Humbug"—the "Moonshine" of poor Pen. But they were bad and blind, all of them, no doubt. On the present occasion, however,

Fanchon returned with the grateful tidings that her stratagem had triumphed:—

“Mais, mille tonnerres! la chienne vieille comes to make inquiries in person.”

“N’importe,” replied Violette, with a yawn; “we can manage her now. Here, hide this, and fasten my robe: that will do; now give me the class-book; I shall open it directly I hear her.”

The novel was accordingly secreted, an epithet intended for the widow ventured and enjoyed, and every thing put in trim for an effectual “gull.”

Its result proved triumphant. Mrs. Lawrence found her niece’s eyes so rivetted on “The Christian’s Manual,” that even her entrance was for a time unnoticed; one little hand, moreover, being pressed against her cheek in the very most tooth-aching *pose* conceivable.

“Is my poor Violette a sufferer—will she send for opium? What can be done for my precious darling?”

Thus soothingwise the matron invariably addressed her charge—to say the least, a considerable qualification of the language which was wont to pour from the same source upon her children. A dreamy recollection of that contingent ten thousand a year may in part account for the difference.

“Don’t talk to me, aunt; I am much worse: opium has no effect; nothing but silence.”

“Will my own Violette,” asked the persisting widow, but in more dulcet tones, “give me her class-book, and Mr. Blake shall be desired to mark some additional texts for next week?”

At this ticklish crisis a voice was heard at the door.

“Mamma—Violette—Mr. Blake is waiting: we are late.”

This was Elinor.

“Oh, do please leave me, aunt!” whined the agonized mongrel. “I am quite nervous to-day, and talking but increases my pain.”

Mrs. Lawrence precipitately fled, and the class-book was flung upon the floor.

Shall we take this opportunity of describing Violette? You have heard she was pretty, have seen she was spoiled. Petite, bright looking, rather brunette than blonde, with ever-blossoming geraniums on her cheek, a couple of mouse-tails highly arched above her eyes, and eyes which let you into her character—or *her want of it*—at once: hair, silken, curly, glossy, raven-black, clustering round her throat, the longest ringlets kissing every now and then on her swelling bosom. Lovely beyond a

doubt, her loveliness was of the dangerous cast — dangerous more to herself than others.

There are some people, of both sexes, who seem born for folly, and worse than folly—for vice: you may read their destiny in their looks, long before that destiny is accomplished: circumstances may favour or retard, but do they ever avert it? You may immure them—Danæe like, the shower of gold will find an entrance: you may tend them strictly; example and precept may be called to your aid against the evil spirit who seems to have entered in at their childhood's earliest hour; but you cannot work miracles; you have no power to cast out devils: nothing will avail, unless the grace of God and His inscrutable purpose has otherwise thought fit: they have a race to run through sin, infamy, wretchedness, reck-

lessness—to.....but the end is dreadful. Alas, for those children of darkness!

We will not longer dwell on the charms, the ill-starred, fatal charms, which clung to this orphan-girl like vampires, and, like vampires, let not go their hold until her life-blood was exhausted. In truth, it must be told that, in the present case, the one main idol of Mrs. Lawrence's heart—Mammon—thinly silvered over, for conscience sake, by that dismal coating, that miserable counterfeit of piety, of which she was the fountain-head, so blinded and lulled the better feelings which we will be charitable enough to suppose she had at one time or other possessed, that no precautions were taken against that evil dæmon, of whose visits most houses are certain, but to whom Violette's—what shall we write?—*constitution* offered peculiar welcome.

Things *might* have turned out better with her charge; but Mrs. Lawrence, lapped in self-righteous slumber, and blindly prostrating her reason and duty before the golden calf, left all besides to the effect—*be that what it might*—of the Saturday's examination and Sunday's service. We will witness its effect; we will see the recoil; we shall behold the worshipped image ground into powder, and swallowed by herself!

Fanchon has resumed her native garb.

“D'aujourd'hui en huit, ma'mselle—yah, yah!” cried she, kicking at the discarded class-book with a hideous grin.

“Comment?” demanded Violette, forgetting for a moment her allusion.

“D'aujourd'hui en huit, Monsieur Blake et votre tante—yah, yah!” returned the bonne.

“ Oh, that odious class-book ! but put it out of my sight. Now sit down, Fanchon, while I read this appetizing *morçeau*. Look at the picture : now, is he not a dear ? ”

“ Quelles jolis favoris, mon Dieu ! ” ejaculated Fanchon.

“ Mais c’est lui, c’est le heros ! ” was her pupil’s rapturous rejoinder. “ Now listen . . . ”

The entertainment in question being one of those infamous productions of the modern French school, we will leave them to gloat over its obscene excitement, and introduce such slight notice of Fanchon as may be requisite for our tale.

This odious individual was a native of Paris, and had been foster-mother, some fifteen years back, to Violette. Her husband and child were reported to have died at that period ; and for the decease of the latter we can vouch ; but a marital epidemic

must have raged with unusual virulence in the capital, if the extensive application which, in her case, the former term would warrant, were true, Fanchon bearing a striking analogy, as regarded her social condition, to the woman of Samaria.

We found her well on in middle age, stout, masculine, coarse, still handsome, but with a bold, repulsive expression, replaced, on occasion, by a fawning, cringing, mock humility, yet more forbidding to such as fathomed her performance. Disgustingly offensive in her language, she was so much the knave as to pass for a harmless character with the culpably careless matron. Violette, indeed, was well versed in her tastes and disposition; but alas! alas! she had taught Violette first to tolerate her vices, then to smile upon and finally to emulate them! Insensibly, but surely, she had established

unbounded sway over the thoughtless, unfortunate orphan. It was her influence that carried this literary poison into its victim's rooms, there to lurk, under lock and key, in the *écritoire*, and to lead to deeds which never let me name.—Away with her!

CHAPTER VII.

It is now the afternoon of the morrow, a breezy, clear, spring day. The sound of heavy wheels is heard by Mrs. Lawrence, as she sits in her easy chair, lost in a wilderness of tracts, and bethinks her what a terrible pity it is that Hélena has been so irremediably spoiled, and all for nothing—*that* was the rub, mused mother Lawrence.

Now the sound increases, she rises, peeps circumspectly through the Venetian blind, and hurries to—change her cap.

While Mrs. Longfellow, Lucy, and Wellesly, are waiting her appearance in the

drawing-room, we will follow the fugitive widow into her own closet.

What is she lifting so daintily out of that bandbox?—a cap, a filthy, crumpled cap, yet considered Mrs. Lawrence's dress cap, for all that. She could buy no end of new ones if she chose, which is pleasant to know.

Now freshened, cap à pie, she has descended to apologize to the visitors.

“The head of an establishment”—grandiloquent again—“has so many interests to superintend, that really,” &c.

Let us hunt for the olive branches: Elinor and Susan occupy their usual window-seat, and follow their usual pastime of deciphering vacuity; Violette, with Fanchon and a footman, has driven out on the Bridlestone downs; and Hélena and Henry are in the shrubbery somewhere. Poor Hassan,

the dragoman, stands afar off, envying his master's sister the company of her brother, Hassan having been, up to her arrival, attendant on Henry's promenades.

“Allah look down on you both in love; you, that are like the cedars of my own country for grace and beauty; and you, new-come spirit of Paradise!”

Thus mused the Egyptian, as he turned out of their path ere they came in sight.

“Keep a strong and courageous heart, Hélena; the change is almost too much for you; but none can tell when the darkest cloud may not be pierced by the sun's rays, or the wildest hurricane change to calm. Courage is all you require, courage and forbearance—but see,” as they neared an opening in the trees, “yonder is the Bridle-stone carriage; hurry we home. I do so long to introduce you to Sir William Price

and his sisters, such excellent, warm-hearted people, so unlike—" here Henry *quos ego*'d his comparison, and added, in lieu, "or Norah Burton may be there—such a droll girl, you can't think; or Lucy, whom I have made you promise to love; or....."

Words would not thrive without breath, and Henry, what with the railroad pace at which he was propelling his sister and himself, and the intense earnestness which he threw into his descriptive outlines, had quite exhausted that essential.

They were now at the door, and entered. Sandys thought he had never seen such a beautiful creature in his life; but he thought the same of every new pretty face that caught his eye.

Mrs. Longfellow invited her over to Bridlestone on a visit of some days, but was met by Mrs. Lawrence abruptly de-

clining it for her daughter, "whom," she remarked, "I would wean from all mundane and evanescent joys. I anticipate a struggle; she has been nurtured in a bad, an impious, school; but I look for a final victory, and must not yield one inch of ground to the great enemy of souls."

What this had to say to the matter, it were needless to conjecture. In explanation, however, of the widow's severe language and somewhat inflated style, it should be understood that her acquaintance with what she termed "the world without" had, many years ago, been abandoned as likely to contaminate that extreme purity of heart, to which she laid claim, as well as to endanger her convictions, which were, many of them, to say the least, peculiar. Her vocabulary was principally derived from the perusal of earnest, but somewhat illiberal

and melancholy, works, whose doctrines are calculated to precipitate people of timid dispositions in thousands from the Monument or over London Bridge. This may in part account for the old lady's antipathy for town.

Mrs. Longfellow knew better than to reason, however mildly, with fanaticism, long sown and deep-rooted, so she merely expressed her sorrow, and rose to go. Lucy whispered to her new friend—she felt they were friends at once—her intention of calling again when she returned to Bridlestone: they shook hands warmly, and, looking in each other's eyes, saw tears.

“She understands mamma,” thought *Hélène*.

“Poor girl!” mused Lucy, “what a life you have before you.”

The door having closed, Mrs. Lawrence retired to change her cap. Henry conducted the ladies to their carriage.

“Oh, I was almost forgetting my commission!” cried Mrs. Longfellow, as she held out her hand to the youth; “Sir William and my sister, myself, Lucy”—here that damsel turned away her head—“and indeed every one at Bridlestone, insist on your making one of our party to-day for dinner. The Montgomerys have just received some new music, and our circle, independent of every *other* consideration, would not in *that* department be perfect without the English Orpheus.”

“I am unfortunate,” returned Henry, with no attempt to conceal his vexation; “for my mother required and obtained a promise yesterday that for the present I should not leave home. You know me too

well, all of you, to doubt that otherwise I should not have refused."

"Then, *helas!*" sighed Mrs. Longfellow, as she bowed her farewells, and drove away.

"Then, *helas!*" ruminated Lucy, our pale and quiet Lucy, whose attachment for the interdicted hero had long been of a tender—the very tenderest—nature.

It was hinted before, and now we may boldly declare, that Lucy and Henry, simple souls! are in love. It is that old, established love, which, formed in infancy, has strengthened with their strength, and changed from a pastime to a sentiment with their change from childhood to youth. Lucy's love, *as a rule*, is placid without rapture, confiding without exaction, but firm and pure—the very purest love. Henry's savours more of passion and display; he has a weakness for sonnets, and *bouquets*, and evening hours,

during which last genial and romantic season his charmer indulges him pretty regularly with a stroll, whose whisperings and other soft sensations are somewhat modified, it is true, by the invariable presence of his school and college chum, Wellesly—a stipulation on *her* part, *sine quâ non*. But the *bouquets* are unrestricted, and the sonnets admired; and by insensible degrees the pertinacious Romeo has contrived to introduce a guitar, which Juliet would not tolerate at first, but which the attraction of his splendid voice has in fine sanctioned.

There is a grove, sacred to these most musical *réunions*, on the confines of Bridlestone. But a copy of stanzas, despatched to the trysting spot in charge of friend Hassan, yet carelessly dropped *en route*, and which has thus come into *our* hands, must close this notice, and your curiosity. On a

very tasteful and highly scented sheet of what the trade call "satin glaze," and one of a diurnally indited many, was traced—

"Yes, Lucy; thou art right—for vain,
Till suppliant ingots fall
From out thine eyes in golden rain,
Were human efforts all;
She will not hear, *I* dare not ask —
Yet longer must we wear the mask!

"Ah, Lucy! years have gone and come,
And left, and found it so —
Our twin hearts lodg'd in common home,
But hid, for none may know:
Yet longer—ere *her* dream of *gold*
Is past, and *ours* of *love* be told!

"Sweet Lucy! nourish hope—be sure
A brighter dawn will break—
Nay, even now, though still obscure,
Our day-star is awake;
And oh, thy tender patient breast
Will teach us to achieve the rest!"

This has been introduced, not as a specimen of Henry's *powers*, by far too discursive for any solitary sample, but in some

measure to acquaint the reader that the course of true love was not, in the present more than any other case, to run smooth; that the tempest which ruffled its waters was no other than Madam Lawrence's design upon Violette's £10,000 a year, but that hitherto no rumour of Henry's disaffection had been permitted to reach her itching ears. Sequences will appear anon. Meantime, we must resume our thread, having left the Corydon fretting under tantalizing fate.

It was, indeed, with a feeling, to be interpreted more readily by the heart than lips, that Henry excused himself on the bitter, but inevitable, plea of filial obedience, and that Lucy called to mind the journey which was to absent her, during an entire week, from the precincts of Lawrenceville manor. Although about the least selfish being in the world, she was so stricken by

this ill-timed thought, that, while the carriage pursued its rapid course towards Bridlestone, she found herself unable to resist an internal prompting, which censured Master Wellesly for his want of self-control, very much as follows:—

“Were he more master of himself, there would be no occasion for this tiresome journey to town; I declare, I wonder when he will show any discretion, any common sense;—and then, Henry—a whole seven days—dear, dear!”

“A lovely girl, that *Hélène*,” interposed Mrs. Longfellow; “and with such fine expression!”

“Oh, he always had *that*!”

The ruling idea developed itself, in defiance of her customary caution: poor Lucy was *absent* for the first time in her life! Mrs. Longfellow laughed.

“I did not call Henry Lawrence lovely, you foolish girl; he is handsome, but not lovely; unless, indeed, in.....” but the matron checked her *badinage*, on perceiving a very unusual colour spread its tell-tale glow over the generally pale and placid face of her companion.

“It is true, then,” mused Mrs. Longfellow. “It has actually come to this at last; my poor Lucy has found a lover, and lost her heart!”

Overcome by which proof positive idea, the good lady lay back in her carriage, immersed in a deep, yet rapid, current of thought.

Not another word was spoken until the equipage began to wend through those noble chesnut rows which lined the main avenue of Bridlestone; when Mrs. Longfellow—woman of roomy affections—adopting a

measure which was possibly suggested by the near termination of their drive, laid Lucy's hands gently between her own, and, stooping and kissing her still crimsoned cheek, whispered, in that resistless tone of sympathy so *par excellence* her own—

“You will tell me the truth, I am sure, my dear, good child! it is in safe keeping, you know, *here*—Henry has met with favour—and you.....”

A faint, low, trembling voice in answer murmured, “Oh, I love him!”

A shower of kisses sealed their secret, and, the carriage having drawn up, Lucy, in a terrible flutter, hurried to hide herself in her room.

CHAPTER VIII.

But where is Wellesly all this time— Wellesly, our prime favourite, our hero of a hundred faults? You will find him strolling, idle visionary as he was, on foot through the springing meadows, towards home.

He had deserted the ladies, at their visit's end, had prayed his excuses, and, with a hint from Henry to expect him anon, was devouring with tremendous appetite his brilliant future. Lucy's cautionary lectures either forgotten or discarded, he had leaped over every obstacle with the first stile. By far too sanguine to consider his chances calmly, he would not submit his rioting

spirits to any self-imposed incarceration, but, already outstripping probability and time, constructed aërial castles, in which, it is but justice to mention, Lucy was to take up her permanent abode, and reaping aërial honours, which were to be mightily enhanced by Lucy's approbation.

At this rate careering, it was by the most vigorous efforts that Henry overtook him.

"What an express speed you employ, Sandys! I have been tracking you ever since you started, and come up lividly out of breath. A wager, I presume, against the Bridlestone carriage?"

"No," returned his friend, with a laugh; "I scarcely knew my expedition until now. When a man has a tremendous secret, you see, incessantly goading him, he is apt to burst into a gallop; which was my case."

“A secret?” echoed the other, incredulously. “Why, positively, you’re about the last fellow in creation to hold it long!”

He proffered an arm, and they trudged on joyously together. Wellesly soon resumed—

“We leave Bridlestone to-morrow, Lucy and myself, for London; but to return in a week, or even less, if....” here he displayed some difficulty in mastering it.

“The secret! the secret!” cried Henry. “I knew it was not far off.”

“No, no; I’m not so hard pushed as you suppose,” answered the other, who had more than half made up his mind to unburthen.

“You must certainly explode, man. I can see at a glance it is doing you harm,” said his tormentor, with great gravity.

“If you would only change the subject,” returned Wellesly, recollecting his sister’s

injunction—"just to prevent premature disclosures, you know: indeed, I faithfully promise you shall hear everything when chance becomes certainty; nay more, you must *share* my happiness."

"By Jove, you mystify me!" ejaculated Henry. "Your happiness—a secret—you surely are not going to be married, my boy?"

"No such luck; more's the pity!" was the answer, with a mischievous chuckle, as he added—"Now, *do* let me baffle your curiosity for a week—only one week—and the whole shall be laid before you: is it not fair?"

"Yes; and granted on my part; but under the full conviction that, before we part, I shall know all!"

"No more bullying, Henry; I cry your mercy: but this new sister of yours—what a marvel, is she not, for beauty?"

“Yes,” returned the youth, with a serio-comic lisp; “it is unusual, doubtless, to find two such perfect specimens under one roof.”

“Conceited puppy, to be sure! If the lines had so fallen that I was the maiden’s brother, then, and then only, your remark had been but justice.”

“Well, we may come to terms,” said the accepted, but unsuspected Henry, who, for evident reasons, had agreed with Lucy that of all people their amiable friend Wellesly was, under present circumstances, most carefully to be kept in the dark. “For you *are* the brother of one, in *my* opinion, at least, fifty times more beautiful than Hélène;” and, having thus far gone, he went no further in that direction, but added—“Now, my dear old fellow, promise not to delay your return *beyond* a week.”

“ Oh, readily; for Lucy—whom I think you over-praise—has assured me that a week, at the very outside, will accomplish the object of our journey, reveal my secret, carry us back to Bridlestone, and.....”

“ Well, and what?”

“ And restore us to each other, to be sure,” was his quick rejoinder, while, blushing and smiling, he patted his comrade’s arm.

“ You are a terrible rogue, Sandys—an expert tactician: I give you up for a shuffling, mystifying, bamboozling diplomate, until the fulness of your seven days’ time amend you.”

“ Agreed. Let us talk about your recent travels: neither anecdote nor description has hitherto crossed your lips on the subject.”

“ Sit down, then, on this fanciful stile,”

said Henry, "and you shall have a passage from my wanderings."

"All right!" returned Wellesly, as they arranged themselves into attitudes of repose.

"You will prefer," began the traveller, "a running commentary, concise and pithy, of the whole sum of my adventures, the complete extent of my route; or will you tarry with me in Egypt? Were I able to influence you by my personal preference, you should make the latter selection."

"Spontaneously, I prefer the latter: at some other season we shall have India, China, Borneo, and the countless isles of the sea."

A prophetic gleam flashed across the auditor's mind that shortly he might be in a position to examine these ultimate regions for himself—but this was part of his secret.

“Nowhere in the East,” Henry went on, “have I been able to realise those gorgeous descriptions, dream-like pictures—that poetry of form, action, and every thing—that variety, which so many of us imbibe and invent from the Arabian Tales, so fully, so potently, as in Egypt. Though Fashion, of late, has sent her votaries to haunt its classic sands, it has been, for certain geographical and political reasons, so far enabled to preserve what I shall call *the spirit of Orientalism* more unsullied and unchanged than we find it either in the Osmanli or Arabian parts.

“Turkey is overrun by Franks: you meet them in the coffee-shops, smoking divans, bazaars, baths, at *levées* and all public *fêtes*. The thoroughfares throng with them: their graceless, uneasy, inconvenient garb, has curried favour with the magnates of Stam-

boul, and a Turkoman of the purest race may be mistaken, in these civilized habiliments, for a Jonathan or Jones.

“ On the other hand, Arabia is too thinly populated, too barbarous, and too wide, to be capable of affording that species of highly spiced entertainment, for which we have prepared our imaginations, and without which the East is no East to them. It is in the land of the Pharaohs, in Cairo, and up the Nile; in the markets and mosques; in the motley groupings of the cities—their omni-lingual hum; amid the date gardens; beside the Pyramids; in their mighty river, with his influencing changes; their ruined towns and temples; in the very climate and sky; in the street architecture; in its daily and nightly decorations, as worn and as exhibited, that we recognise the *ensemble* of our earliest and

fondest fancies, almost unharmed by lapse of Time.

“Cairo is the emporium, the central rendezvous between the Orient and West. It is the fancy-fair of Africa and Ind. There are to be seen, in their native *poses*, the children of the desert, steering their steady, richly-laden ships, through turbaned crowds, pausing now and anon to tell or learn the news, to whiff a companionable bowlful, or commend their fellow-funigators to the mercies of God.

“You remember where it is written: ‘There is not on the face of the earth a more loveable country than Egypt, with its Nile: he who hath not seen Cairo, hath not seen the world: its soil is gold; its Nile is a marvel; its women resemble the black-eyed houris of Paradise; its houses are palaces; its air genial; its odour surpassing

that of the aloes-wood, and cheering the heart. Did ye see its gardens in the evening, with the shade obliquely spreading o'er them, ye would indeed behold a wonder, and yield with ecstasy to their delights.'

"So true is this description, that I need not hope to heighten its effect by any further touches, and will only add, that whenever you have the chance to journey into far countries, *go there!* *Au reste*, Sheherazade has left me nothing to tell."

"Oh, but she has!" cried Wellesly, gaily; "for I am dying to know how you managed to get your mother's consent to so extensive and expensive a tour. Why, at school, you were tied to the usher's tails; and at College, had it not been for your aunt that's gone....."

"Enough," interposed young Lawrence, *not* overjoyed at this reminder. "Long be-

fore I was able to furnish myself with the thews and sinews of peregrination, I had set my heart on the East: an expedient at length suggested itself—a most notable and happy expedient.—You are aware,” he continued, not looking happy at all, “that mamma has certain romantic intentions with regard to Violette de Merton and myself?”

“Yes,” returned his friend: “but you have too much sense to encourage them; that is, if report does not malign the young lady.”

“Trust me, Sandys; I would just as soon think of marrying Fanchon: poor Violette is any thing but what she should be—any thing but what I should wish *my wife* to be; and alas, for her own sake, that she is! Natheless, my good friend, there may be policy in humouring the old lady’s monetary views, by leaving it apparently an

open question: there can be no harm in *that*, you know."

"Oh, none whatever: and further, between ourselves, Harry, don't you see a strong resemblance in your mother to the duenna in 'Neameh and Noam?' I suggest this, now that we are combining, as it were, the two subjects."

"Yes; I have often been on the point of telling her so, and, fortunately for myself, was restrained by the conviction that she knew nothing about the story in question. My parent shows little predilection for literature; and the more cheerful it is, the less she devours it: the drawing-rooms, to be sure, sitting-rooms, bed-rooms, tables, chairs, nay, even conservatories, are strewn with countless multitudes of tracts, missionary pamphlets, and Baptist magazines; but I cannot believe she *peruses* them,

having myself sometimes peeped into a dozen of them, consecutively, on Sunday, in the hope of finding some sublime idea, some happy rendering, and found nothing of the sort; nothing but miserable, sleepy expressions of indolent resignation, terrific ejaculations, and revolting familiarity in their mention of the Creator. Mamma, however, seems to imagine that the very ownership of such devout treatises is more than half the battle. But I digress from my explanation of my travelling *ruse*.

“ Wanting to get away from home, and destitute of means, I paid a visit, private and confidential, one fine day, to the French beauty, my cousin; discovered her luxuriating, unaware of my *entrée*, in the improprieties of a French novel, arrayed more as a courtesan than a gentlewoman, and her footman in the anteroom, romping with the

bonne, who seemed, like her companion, mightily taken aback by my presence. Now, just imagine!"

"Shocking!" returned Wellesly, much and painfully interested: "how dangerous a study, how evil an example!"

"In my opinion," resumed Henry, "Violette is past example; all along she has led a froward life."

"She is not old," suggested the other, hopefully.

"Young, indeed, in years, but older in one particular, than you would care to have proven: we will dismiss, however, the ungrateful theme, when I mention that the object of my visit was to request Mam'selle de Merton's good offices with her aunt on my behalf, to obtain the liberty of the subject, as also to negotiate a grant of the needful supplies.

“Violette, glad to get my face turned for the time, was to make any use she thought proper of the attachment which neither felt, but which both were assumed by Mrs. Lawrence to feel; and the upshot of the affair was, that my mother made liberal advances, on the distinct understanding that I should think of nothing but Violette—her charming, excellent little Violette, as she calls her—during my absence, and that on my return I must make up my mind to commence a course of incessant and unflinching courtship.

“The bargain was struck; I, for my part, firmly believing that Violette’s inclinations would in the interim have developed themselves to such a degree, that even my careless progenitress could no longer encourage the one terrible project, our union,—that the girl would have eloped with

her groom, or the scullion, or both; thus giving the *coup de grâce* to our supposititious preference for ever."

"Unfortunate Violette!" said Wellesly. "Yet you do not suspect that any thing seriously wrong has already taken place?"

"I *do*; but, unable to substantiate my suspicions, must hope against hope," was the seriously spoken answer, followed immediately by his starting up to say "Good by!"

"I must leave you, my boy," he resumed, ridding himself of the foregoing tristful subject by a heavy-drawn sigh. "Mamma dines early, and will miss me. As it is, you know, I stole away."

"I shall not detain you, Harry: yet, were you to sketch, however hastily, the description of an Eastern Peri or two, it would vastly sharpen my appetite for the

festive board — languishing eyes, henna-tipped fingers, jewelled ankles; that kind of thing...”

“Nonsense!” interjected Henry, with supreme contempt. “I know an English girl worth a whole harèm full.....” Then, checking himself again, he remembered how dangerous a confidant that invaluable girl’s brother might prove, so quietly resumed—
“But, since you must have another notice of my progress, I shall tell you what I made patent to myself, one evening, as I sauntered through the incense-wrapped bazaar streets of Cairo. It appeared to my musing thoughts that, should any thing happen which I hope in my heart may *not* happen, should any thing arise between my crochetty mother and her rather peppery son, the best course to adopt would be to journey again to Egypt, and establish myself as a merchant among the Faithful.

“This I could do; for in a few months I have a right to my poor father’s fortune, amounting to the magnificent sum of less than two hundred a-year: and shop-keeping, you are aware, is considered the reverse of degrading in those parts, where every sire, by the behest of his creed, is enjoined to instruct his son in the duties of some profession, and where men of the first class are frequently to be found behind a counter.”

“Oh, certes!” returned Wellesly, with a semi-leer. “And furthermore, it is open to promotion: ‘You may be Syndic, one of these days,’ Aladdin’s father remarks: ‘sitting in the market streets and shops requireth, under every circumstance, polite and accomplished manners.’ Yet, had I your nest of nightingales in my throat, I should unhesitatingly prefer pursuing my fortunes in the fields of song.”

“I had thought of that, also,” answered Henry, gravely; then, changing his tone—
“Good afternoon, my comrade; we shall never separate, at this pace; and my mother is ringing for dinner, I dare venture. Remember, only one week: so, *sans adieu!*”—
and, leaping the stile, the heir of Lawrenceville was soon beyond recall.

CHAPTER IX.

Lucy Sandys recovered speedily from her romantic confusion; in fact, she had too much common sense to be romantic long; and, once restored, set about preparation for to-morrow's journey.

Doubtless she was unnecessarily tedious in the arrangement of her portmanteaus, nor would admit the willing lady's-maid; but packed and unpacked without any apparent issue, every now and again pausing just to take one peep at some "satin glaze" sonnet, as it slipped from the folds of a dainty *mouchoir*; then to resume, with a tender sigh, her Danaïdes' labours, and so

on, until she had soothed herself into that decorous calm which was her rule, proved beyond a doubt by to-day's exception.

To return to Lawrenceville: dinner has given way to dessert; a frugal dessert of biscuits, in honour of the Reverend Anthony Blake, for whom a cover is laid once in the week, on which occasion the above refecton comes forward.

On other days, Mrs. Lawrence dispenses with things of the kind, having a decided objection to any unnecessary outlay. "It might be devoted to an infinitely more useful purpose," as she has often remarked, and with justice; and which truism—though never acted upon—is echoed by *her* echoes, the Misses Elinor and Susan.

Poor Anthony Blake consumes the exceptional biscuits in blissful ignorance of the compliment paid him by their provision.

"I should like to have *your* opinion of Miss Norah Burton, madam," said this timorous clergyman, as something brought her name upon the table.

Anthony was expected to have, and *had*, generally, the greatest possible deference for Mrs. Lawrence's fiat, yet looked rather uneasy, and nearly choked himself with a biscuit, when Norah was denounced by the widow as "a coarse lump"—"dreadfully ugly"—"quite a horror"—and so forth; Elinor and Susan, as in duty bound, expressing themselves with propinquate severity.

It was part of their education, this seconding system; indeed, the only part, with the exception of that unvarying catechism, to which any share of attention had been given.

"What could you mean by questioning me on this point, Mr. Blake?" resumed

Mrs. Lawrence, sternly. "I hope you don't think I have my eyes shut:" for she wished him to think her very wide awake, indeed. "Burton is a hideous brute, pock-pitted repulsively, loathsome to a degree. Why, are you mad?"—laying great stress on her polite inquiry as she rose from her chair, and turned those red-rimmed orbs on the writhing curate.

"Oh, no, madam—no; I can assure you not: noth....." he was suffering from biscuit again.

"How are you progressing with your preparatory perusal of Hezekiah, young people?" asked Mrs. Lawrence, generally, of her family, whose answers were favourable, except in the case of Hélena, who confessed to have made but little way.

"I desire your attendance in my dressing-room, Hélena. Children," apostrophizing

the others, "you had better resume your search."

With which allusion to Hezekiah, the Lady Superior sailed out of her parlour, followed by postulants and novice, and leaving the Reverend Anthony Blake to recover from his mental and physical disorder.

An audible sigh of relief escaped the poor curate's lips, in spite of himself; but fortunately he was once more alone.

Hélène, anticipating an introduction to Hezekiah, in the shape of some lengthy commentary from her dame, looked demure.

"Be seated, my dear," began Resignation, in a bland voice and unusual—"I have somewhat to communicate of a terrestrial, nevertheless advantageous, nature: listen, and do not interrupt me."

"Has she taken too much wine?" was the

unfilial reflection of her stranger daughter :
“but no; she seems quite cool, quite too resigned.”

“Hélène,” continued Mrs. Lawrence, with impressive gravity, “I am desirous to provide you with a husband.”

“She is mad!” thought the girl; but the parent went on.

“You are handsome—not so handsome as *I* was at your age.”

Now, Mrs. Lawrence must have forgotten; for she was always plain, some said ugly.

“But still,” she pursued, “handsome; accomplished in the things of this world; educated for the vanities of earth, and unfitted for that calm seclusion so fondly courted by your sisters—let me add, *your betters*—at home. You are giddy, vain, worldly.” This, though a mere repetition,

made the peroration longer. "For such as you has matrimony been ordained; and accordingly I have arranged your espousal."

All of which, enunciated with such overweening superiority, led *Hélène* to look upon the matter as beyond appeal. For a moment it was Anthony Blake, the penniless curate, who flashed across her mind.

"No, no; it is not he: an empty purse is mamma's aversion. Who, then, can it be?"

She had no more time for reflection.

"No interruptions, *Hélène*: remember—I peremptorily forbid them! The gentleman whom I design to be my son is a zealous, uncompromising Christian; a person of large possessions, high connexions, conscientious principles, sterling integrity, and holding a commission from the Queen. I believe him to be a soldier as of the Crown so of the Cross."

“Ha!” thought the daughter, who had a mild form of the scarlatina, “that’s something, at any rate!”

“I am informed it is his invariable custom to furnish his company quarterly with tracts; and that, even on parade, his letter says, he points them to another world. It was only the other day I received, through his mother, whom in years gone by I knew, this parcel of evangelical yearnings for your perusal and, he prays fervently, eternal weal.

“Having lately arrived from India, on furlough, he used, it appears, to see you in town, walking and driving with your unnatural aunt: though strangers to each other, he admired your face, and was anxious for an opportunity of making your acquaintance. This has hitherto been denied him; but his mother, relying on our former inti-

macy—albeit a renewed woman, she is still, I fear, too mundane for *me*—mooted the subject, by his desire, in an epistle; and, after much private meditation”—moonshine again, but no Pen!—"much earnest, solemn, and prayerful wrestling, I have been led to perceive the reciprocal advantages which such an alliance is calculated to entail.

"With which view," she continued, raising her eyes, and looking ferociously resigned, "I have invited the young man to shelter within our sanctuary, where he will probably present himself to-morrow: *your* duty, Hélena, I need scarcely remark, is implicitly to abide by MY decision; indeed, I do not intend that you shall have any voice in the matter—*so that he be fitting, you are his.*"

Having said thus, Mrs. Lawrence drew rein.

“But his name, mamma—you forgot that?” inquired the young lady, complacently, as rather favouring the idea of a captain.

“His name is Greenspur: though his piety and pay are of weightier import, yet the Greenspurs belong to a noble race: Captain Greenspur’s mother, my friend, a Miss De Sardis, whose father was brother to the late Earl of Chelmston, and whose mother.....”

At this link in the genealogical tree, Mrs. Lawrence was somewhat discomfited by finding the destined bride bathed in tears, and sobbing into her handkerchief bitterly and loud.

“How!—what is this, my dear? Explain yourself, Hélena: you surely overdo the thing: a few blushes and a start or two would have been quite ample. Give over,

my love"—not spoken lovingly at all—"give over!"

But Hélena only sobbed the more.

"Miss Lawrence," began Miss Lawrence's mamma, with intense tragic utterance—she thought herself pretty good in *that* vein—"I demand an explanation of your unprecedented bearing, full, unqualified, immediate!"

"And you shall have it, mamma," returned her daughter, rising from her chair, and mastering herself completely. "Only hear *me* as I heard *you*, and I will present this Captain Greenspur in such a light as must horrify and convince you!"

"You are demented, Miss Lawrence—possessed by the roaring lion!"

"Oh, not so, mamma: I know Captain Greenspur only too well: have patience, then, and hear me. It is true, as you said,

that he saw and admired me: his next step was to send an acquaintance to negotiate an introduction; this being denied, he called one day with a common friend. I was not in the drawing-room at the time, and my dear Aunt Pen, having had some previous notice of him, of a very unfavourable nature, received him at extreme distance, as frigidly as politeness would permit. Foiled, thus, in his direct attempts, he had recourse unmanfully, atrociously.....”

“Moderate your language, Miss Lawrence. It is evident you are utterly deluded: quite out of the question, that the man Greenspur, against whom you may have every reason to express your vehement protest, has any identity with my friend, Mrs. Greenspur’s son — quite out of the question!”

“Now, pray, mamma, one moment hear

me; and, if the culprit should unfortunately be *he*, will you not thank me for having timeously unmasked a villain? I was about to tell you that he applied himself to tamper with my aunt's domestics. Through this channel he discovered that I had a *femme de chambre* of my own."

"Why, bless me, how extravagant!" from mother Lawrence.

"And further, that it was my frequent custom to make Sophie the companion of my early walks round the square. Unfortunate Sophie! she was pretty, innocent, unsuspecting. Presents of ribbons, a watch, and other trinkets, came pouring in, through some foot-boy, from a handsome officer, directed to his 'darling love;' all which she foolishly concealed from us, until too late.

"This was temptation such as alone she

knew not how to combat, and secrecy blindly dragged her to her ruin! Afraid of being laughed at, she thought I would ridicule; she never dreamed I might censure. His tactics triumphed; her head was turned. A few steps further led to assignations, and so forth, and in fine, the heartless monster held her his powerless prey!

“ Yet was this but the beginning of his purpose: Sophie was to be nothing more than a cat’s-paw, helping him to *me*. Mamma, mamma, it was to reach *me*, that he blighted *her*! At this stage, irremediable for Sophie, she came to see her degradation, confessed her shame, and was dismissed, with proper precautions for her future safety.

“ Then Aunt Pen fell sick and died: sorrow first, and subsequently change, drove all thought of the matter from my mind;

but I cannot forget the name, the circumstances, or my escape; and I know I should recognise the monster at a glance, hundreds of times as he has glared upon me in my dreams. Beware, mamma, lest to his other sins he adds hypocrisy! beware lest, fascinated by his serpent eyes, the poison of his breath pollute us all!"

And, pale and sad, the maiden sat her down again.

"Your harrowing tale only convinces me the more that you falsely accuse an innocent man. Yet you say you know Captain Greenspur, Hélena?"

"In imagination I do, though I never actually saw him."

"Oh, shame upon you, then, for maligning, without evidence, one who, I have every reason to believe, is the very nearest possible approach to a saint! Did your

ill-conditioned servant-woman describe his appearance?"

"Yes," replied Hélena, calmly; "he wore long, curly hair, she said, thick moustaches, and a beard."

"Ha! well, we shall see," cried Mrs. Lawrence.

"See, mamma! You are content, then, on the *possibility* of his being that ruffian, to admit Captain Greenspur to your house, to introduce him to your daughters, to..... Alas! Aunt Pen, whom you accuse of careless and unguarded habits, would have perished before she countenanced, ay, even a suspected reprobate! Be assured, however, and nothing shall change me, that, while I hope to preserve all due reverence for your authority, no force, should I discover his identity with Sophie's ravisher, no persuasion, or entreaty, will induce me

to sacrifice myself before his victim-reeking shrine!"

Having said which, and bursting into non-fictitious tears, the hapless *Hélène* fled from before her mother's scowl. And scowl she did, that self-sufficient widow, as she sat, browbeaten for the moment by her daughter's indignant virtue!

It was a strange picture, with much depth of shadow, dark masses of background, strange and solemn—to see the old lady who had for years collected round her every household attribute, all dignity, importance, opinion, voice in the household councils, every show of gloomy, spiritless religion—had made herself all in all, and tolerated no rival, permitted no appeal, smiled no smiles, but cauterized the youth and happiness, the glow and loveliness, of the household hearts, until nothing remained

but empty and repulsive hollowness, intellectual chaos, which the salve of pseudo-resignation, starched propriety, stern, bleak devotion, however it might glaze, could neither remedy nor heal:—to see her sitting there, submitting, in spite of herself, to the honest reproof of her own flesh and blood, of the only daughter on whom her cancerous system had not hitherto the chance to wreak its fatal strength.

But the scene shifted: the matron, a most inveterate gold-hunter, being impressed by one idea, and this, that Greenspur, be he what he might, was *wealthy*, bolstered up her obstinate mania by assuming, with equal doggedness, that *her* Greenspur was devout; and so, being rich and pious, Hélena was his.

“Stuff and nonsense!” soliloquized the resuscitated dame—“a mistake from begin-

ning to end. How should *she* know any thing about him? Her profligate dressing-woman is to be credited, in preference to my old associate, the man's mother, whose letters, filled with quotations from his daily life, tell a very different tale! Nay, will not the tone of those valuable pamphlets, which, with commendable anxiety to enlighten a dark, alas! a shipwrecked soul, he enclosed to the unworthy object of his love, annihilate every machination that the evil spirit, warring from within, and prompting to an unjust and unholy construction of the purest motives, may suggest, but shall not, cannot prove?

“*I* am Mrs. Lawrence; I hope I know my position: I have a daughter, a worldling, a sheep ever ready to go—or a goat already gone—astray: shall I submit to her caprice? No! Shall I not struggle against her man of sin? Yes!”

This was a mere evangelical figure of speech, and not any ill-behaved admirer.

“Here is Captain Greenspur, high family, good pay, and all that, and devoted body and soul to the cause”—*what* cause, Mrs. Lawrence knew best. “If he be willing to pluck this brand, this rebellious virgin, from the burning, shall any undutiful resistance on *her* part blind *me* to a sense of *my* duties? No; verily, no!”

And then the widow felt thoroughly stablished: let us leave her.

Henry, having by this time digested his dinner and Hezekiah about equally, returned to the parlour, to look for the simple-hearted Blake. There he sat, arrived at the last biscuit, and making wonderfully little noise. Cheered by the young man's entrance, he cleared his throat, rattled his chair, and signalled for action.

Anthony had been the earliest conductor of Henry's secular, as he continued to be of his religious, education; they always got on wondrously together: one was so generous, warm-hearted, noble; the other so gentle, accommodating, sincere, that they could not but be close friends.

Their opinions, too, on general subjects, tallied, albeit one had greater facility for working those opinions than the other: never mind; there was nothing *wrong* about Anthony Blake.

Henry drew near to the curate's side: it was evident there had been no change of subject in the clergyman's head since his tussle—unintentional on *his* part—with the widow.

“And what do *you* think of Norah, Henry?” asked Anthony, fixing his imploring eyes upon the heir, apparently

without any perception of his own abruptness.

“Think of her?” returned Henry. “Why, that she’s a clever, merry, honest, good-tempered girl—a most enjoyable companion, a delightful.....”

“Thank you, thank you,” interposed the renovated shepherd, afraid that too much praise might embarrass both parties.

“Why, Blake, you surely are not in love with her?” inquired his pupil, beginning to suspect some weakness of the kind, from the clerico’s hurried interruption.

“Oh, now, now! just to think of such a thing! What would Miss Burton say, I wonder? Why, it’s quite dreadful! Did I call her Norah? Dear me! I must be dreaming. You won’t mention it, Henry, on any account. You know I’m not rich enough, or nice enough: and besides, what would Miss Burton say?”

This seemed to be the poser.

“ Very likely, ‘ *Yes !* ’ ” responded Henry, with a laugh ; and at that moment, so critical for the curate’s complexion, a servant summoned them to tea.

CHAPTER X.

The Hamlyns have been continentalizing; slipping about lazily through the autumn and early winter, and are finishing up, during the coldest and first spring months, at Naples. We find them accordingly there, breakfasting at the English hour of twelve — Sir Geoffry, Lady Hamlyn, and Florence; moreover, Pilkington Beauchamp, Esq., Lieutenant in H. M.'s —th Regiment, A. D. C. to Sir Geoffry during his late government of certain western colonies, and now hanger-on in expectation of a similar appointment somewhere else.

The General — for the ex-Governor is a

soldier—has managed to preserve at sixty a fine head of white hair, an unborrowed set of white teeth, an upright carriage, and altogether a very military and comely presence. No wonder, therefore, that, unwilling to squander such charms upon the desert air of widowhood, he thought fit some five years back to propose for Miss Madeline Beauchamp, the sister of our worthy A. D. C., or that Miss Madeline thought fit to accept him. The wonder is that we have been able so long to abstain from a description of this lady—Lady Hamlyn.

First of all, as being the step-mother of Florence, there can be no doubt that the gay and dashing Madeline should figure in our chronicles; and secondly, by her own deserts, she is the very *materiel* for a novel. Far on in twenty, but not a day older, she

seems rather young, we must confess, to be General Hamlyn's half, but may have overlooked this for love, or considered the advantages commensurate in being, as his sleeping partner, more of a public character—what an M. P.'s wife described herself to me the other day—than when a mere unprotected girlish nobody.

Hasty observers might suppose she cared little about him, to see her patronizing and contemptuous—*apparently* only, of course—treatment of the veteran; but such people *deserve* to be, if they are not, egregiously mistaken.

Lady Hamlyn would give you the idea of a bold woman, her beauty—undeniable—being of the brazen order, and her eyes having a long-shot range of fascination, of which I would warn mankind. Tall, beautifully formed, rounded with the voluptuous

finish of a Venus, and quite too much of a Venus altogether, her figure seldom shrinks before a rival: dressed with the most consummate skill, every fold, ribbon, and flower, has its duty to perform, and performs it well; her hair pillows its polished masses low down on her graceful neck, and her pointed velvety fingers wreath themselves in rubies, diamonds, and pearls.

Lady Hamlyn must be certainly a splendid woman, for the officers assert it unanimously, and two artillerymen made fools of themselves about their commanding officer's sparkling spouse, when a little champagned after supper at a Government House ball in —, under Sir Geoffrey's *regime*.

Strange stories, we are assured, were beginning to circulate towards the close of the Hamlyn administration—stories of a personal and indelicate nature, and in which

the Governor's lady was a prominent *figurante* ; but that colony, like others we could name, teemed with scandal ; and when *truth* had nothing to tell, *invention* served up something *piqué au suprême* : even a sea-pie is luxurious, if *garni* !

We abstain, therefore, from publishing the *on-dits* in question, and, with this brief introduction to the youthful Madeline, pass on to the still more youthful and how infinitely superior Florence !

Florence Hamlyn, scarcely sixteen, wears a charming look of youth, which gilds, as it were, and perfects her loveliness. She is marvellously fair, with skin of a bright transparency, and hair of a golden brown ; her eyes, shaped like the almond, glow with spiritual flame.

I will not be positive as to the dimensions of her nose, neither shall I apostro-

phize each feature in detail; sufficient for your purpose and mine, that Florence drove Madeline out of the field for beauty! And, eminently endowed with physical attractions, she had all the other talents in perfection: it is not too much to say that she had.

From her earliest years there appeared an individuality—a prominent fearless genius—in her character and habits, which, while it won her own mother's admiration, occasioned alarm for the highly-gifted daughter's opening future. Distinguished she could not fail to be; there was that within her, prompting to energy, ability, vitality, and showing even then its power: no pressure seemed likely to overcome, while judicious culture might influence and direct it. But, early called by "the separator of companions"—called from that careful guardianship which

would have been rewarded by the final triumph of those healthy principles it was her solicitude to establish firmly in the fertile, over-exuberant soil of her child's mind, Lady Hamlyn the first died.

By the advice of her successor, the precocious Florence was sent to a boarding-school in the north of France, where she aptly learned French and French flippancy, Italian and Italian sentiment, to dance *comme une Elssler*, and to sing *comme un ange*.

Certainly she was a marvellous singer, perhaps unique, without any stage exception; to a warble loud as Grisi, rich as Alboni, flexible as Sontag, passionate as Viardot, thrilling as Lind, she added deeper genius than them all. That afflatus which was heaving and struggling in her ecstatic frame seemed to have found a vent or a

method in music: music was joy, sorrow, life, everything to her! When gay, the lark must have stayed its flight to heaven—when sad, the angels might have stooped to weep in sympathy! I have seen her drenched in a passion of tears for delight with the melody of her own making—the inspiration of her own voice: I learned to look upon her as the very impersonation of song—song embodied, lent to an earth-sprung exponent for purposes beyond our ken, and influencing, actuating, harmonizing, all over which it flowed.

This may seem dreaming to the many; the few will not think it so. One rare peculiarity must not escape mention in fine: some people are said to appreciate no music, to possess no taste, no “ear;” such, when they have heard the rapture-breathing notes of Florence Hamlyn, wept, and wondered,

and lost themselves, just like the rest of us —so much for talent in perfection!

During the autumn verging on our introduction, Florence, much to the misery of a music-master, who was and wished to be thought her captive, bade farewell to school, and joined her father's party at Boulogne, preparatory to their winter's tour.

Pilkington declared to his stars—he had a weakness for calling the heavenly bodies to witness, even on the most immaterial earthly points—that “so bewitching a cwee-twa he had newa beheld,” and made up his mind, I believe, to marry her off-hand. Poor boy! he soon learned to draw in his horns; Florence, or “Flowence,” as he called her, kept him in thorough trim.

As for Sir Geoffry, you never saw a man so proud of his daughter; he looked on her

as so vastly superior to other women, so much above *himself* in intellect, so wonderful, in fact, that there was a reverence in his manner and conversation, when addressed to her, most marked, yet almost just.

Lady Hamlyn hated Florence from the instant of their re-union, hated her partly because she could not understand her, but principally dreading to have so notably superlative a personage in her house and circle. At a moment's glance, moreover, it was patent to her that, however the girl might be disposed to acknowledge that authority with which her double position as wife and mother invested her, there was abundant evidence in the younger lady's bearing and *physique* of innate dignity, intrepid spirit, conscious advantages, in a word, individuality, to check and paralyse

any designs on her rights, liberties, or pleasure.

All her life, hitherto, Madeline had been the centre of a circle, no competitor daring to enter the lists against her: to be sure, the Contessa di Castellano, her sister, and the wife of a Neapolitan diplomate, was acknowledgedly more deeply read, had more mind, and wrote better verses: Madeline, notwithstanding, shone the showier bird, and Madeline's admirers were ever the majority.

But now, when things began to look as though Florence would dethrone her, envy stole in upon her whilom bland repose, and whispered most unpalatable truths into her ear.

Some wives—of the black swan species—make sure of their husband's admiration, and, therewith content, are quite indifferent

to foreign praise : *that* had never been Madeline's way ; she married solely because marriage was an honourable protection, upon which, when it suited her convenience or her years, she might be glad to fall back, but which, as a Darby and Joan system, had no allurements. It was her aim, and she still expected, to occupy that prominent place in the world of flirtation which, by her lavish blandishments, she long had made her own : having no part or lot in uxoriousness, she was not going to curtail in any respect that lax and charming liberty, in which previously she had indulged her daring soul : in fine, "married ladies may act as they choose, nothing is suspicious in *their* position."

Such was the pretentious doctrine she spared no exemplary effort to drill into

Sir Geoffrey's head: and Sir Geoffrey, for peace sake, generally agreed, although its argument jumped but lamely with his honest humour. Being too old for drill of any description, and too stupid for drill of this self-nincompooping kind, too correct himself to suspect his wife, he used to shake his head when appearances were against her, and, coughing down any suggestions of a criminating nature, would endeavour to represent the most questionable behaviour as "only a little bit of nonsense that will soon wear off."

Perhaps he considered Madeline a child, a creature too juvenile and guileless to do evil; whether or not, she long exerted herself successfully in fostering the delusion, well knowing that, suspicion once aroused, there was that within him which no artifice could have tamed, no confession

calmed, no entreaty appeased or won—that her best cover was his abeyant because confiding integrity; and finally, that the stake was not reputation alone—she could have ignored *that*—but fortune, standing, perhaps existence.

Well played she her cards for years, but luck deserted her at last!

CHAPTER XI.

We left them at breakfast, by this time almost over. A servant brings in the post, a bundle of official-looking long envelopes for the General, a dun or two for poor Pilkington, and some letters for my lady.

“Ha, ha!” laughed Sir Geoffry, showing his good temper and teeth; “this is what I call counting chickens before they are hatched! Here’s a note from my old friend Sir William Price, congratulating me on my appointment to the Governorship of C——, and recommending a Mr. Sandys for private secretary; by the by, I think

we met Sandys at Bridlestone. Is it not rich, Flo', and I myself knowing nothing about it!"

"You have scarcely had the chance, papa," returned Florence; "we only arrived some days ago from Rome, and your English correspondents are probably at a loss where to find you; but see, here is an important-looking document with a tremendous seal; perhaps Sir William will read more intelligibly in the sequel."

The General took it from her hands, and smiled on her beautiful, beaming eyes, as though he saw the gift of prophecy in their lustre: breaking the cover, and rapidly glancing over the page—

"By Jove, you are right!" he cried, with much elation; "here it is, just as Price says. Madeline, do you hear the news?"

"Don't disturb me, love," returned that

lady, languidly; "I have a sparkling *précis* of London gossip before me: Parliament sits, the season will be early and unusually gay, and we must shortly think of retracing our steps, Sir Geoffry."

"I believe you, Madame!" answered the General, gleeful, "though not for either fashion or fun, as I hope to have left England again in a month."

"Left it!—where for?—what do you mean?" asked his wife, in consternation.

"Why, *en route* to India, my dear, that's all. Look here; I hold the Queen's sign manual in my hand once more, and await your felicitations as Governor of C——! But," he continued, turning to his daughter, "Sir William must be answered at once. Here, Flo', will you officiate as acting secretary until Mr. What's-his-name—let me see—Mr. Wellesly Sandys, joins us: I

want you to say to Price how fortunate I feel in being able to oblige him; tell him we will leave Naples immediately—to-morrow, if possible—for England; and do not forget our best regards to them all; I myself must attend to these Downing Street files.”

And he rose with an armful of papers to consider them at leisure in private. Lady Hamlyn interposed.

“General.”

“Well, dear!”

“I don’t think I should like to go to C——.”

“Very well, Madeline; you need not unless you wish it; Florence will come, I dare say.”

“Oh, yes, papa! of all things; I shall be charmed: so much have I read, and wondered about, and longed for the East, that I would not be left behind for worlds!”

“And neither shall you, my darling; I could not think of it *myself* without you,” was her father’s pleased reply.

Lady Hamlyn began to be jealous; not that she *cared* for Sir Geoffry, alas! not she, and still less on account of Florence; but she disliked the faint impression which her refusal seemed to have made on the family mind; she felt like a spoiled child that cries again when foiled in its first desire for commiseration.

“I think it would ruin my health; what do *you* say, Miss Hamlyn?”

“More likely your *complexion*, mamma,” was the rather sarcastic rejoinder.

“Well, I don’t know,” resumed my lady, after a pause, and with a martyr’s sigh; “it is better, perhaps, to accompany my household; husband and wife should not willingly be severed by thou-

sands of miles; who can tell what might happen?"

"I perfectly agree with you, Madeline," said the General, as he shut himself out of the room.

Madeline had some vague but genial fancy that ladies in the East wear turbans, flowing robes of gauze festooned with emeralds as large as turkey-eggs, and lead altogether a picturesque life; she anticipated making a favourable *débüt* as the Governor's wife in such costume, and on the very day of our dialogue might have been seen, in the privacy of her *boudoir*, wreathing her brow in coloured shawls, and attitudinizing before her glass. Upon the whole, she resolved to go.

"What a surprise this will be to the Contessa!" broke in Lady Hamlyn, after a considerable pause, during which Flo-

rence had been writing, as directed, to Bridlestone, and Pilkington disappeared to make the necessary preparations for departure.

Madeline was one of those people who have a decided aversion to silence and want of stir, and, in the absence of any other attraction, she suggested this topic to her daughter, with the hope of eliciting a debate.

“We were to have met all Naples there to-morrow evening, were we not?” asked Florence, carelessly, as she folded her note in conclusion.

“Yes; and I do so long to see some good specimen of these southerners; something dark and fiery, with fine eyes and haughty brow; of course, in the sterner sex: Italian women have but slender pretensions to beauty, their hands and feet are so revoltingly coarse.”

Madeline, it would appear, was remarkable for finish in her extremities.

Just at this talk-of-his-reverence juncture entered Madame la Contessa di Castellano, sister and aunt to our party.

Pauline, for that is her name, numbers five or six years in advance of my lady, and a residence under a warm sun, a relish for the national cookery, and too sleepless a devotion to the Ridotto, have combined to produce that malaria complexion common to oily feeders, ague patients, and rakes, which *passé* hue had indubitably tacked on to its wearer the stigma of an additional ten years, but for her eyes, the most restless and juvenile couple that ever illuminated a human capitol. Small, black, and deeply set, they seemed perfectly uncontrollable: simultaneously reconnoitring your head and feet, swimming,

jumping, flying, and diving—you might as well attempt to outstrip time.

Pauline's tastes may be briefly enumerated—good living, company, and cards; and perhaps it may interest you to hear she is rather *petite* though rotund, dressy, shrewd, singularly indifferent to her husband, which compliment he loses no opportunity to return, and invariably courteous to young men of gambling propensities, be they of foreign growth or home produce, provided always that their purses are of a length entitling them to a place on her roster.

Pauline, who might easily be mistaken for a native, unblest by offspring, affiliates a pug.

“I have just peeped in, *carissimi*, with the hope of finding my charming Florence at the piano; shall I be disappointed?”

asked the vivacious little dog-fancier, with insinuating concern.

“Disappointed in *your* hope, or *my* performance, Contessa, which do you mean?” was Miss Hamlyn’s evasive rejoinder.

“How *could* you misunderstand me, Firenze?—all Venice, Milan, Rome, nay, Europe, teem with your praises; the musical world is in a ferment, a *furore*; *dilettanti* in crowds are this moment storming my gates on the bare chance of an invitation to meet you; your very acquaintances are made famous by your fame: why, only an hour ago.....”

“You will turn the girl’s head, sister, positively you will,” interrupted Madeline, peevishly, envy being at work again—to think that her step-daughter, a school-girl, as she wished to consider her, should be courted and lionized, while not a word was

said about her handsome and elaborate self.

“I wish she were back with her governess in Normandy!”

Some such course of reasoning must have whizzed through the tunnels of her mind; for when, without more ado, the songstress seated herself, and in her own thrilling language proceeded to render that *morçeau*, “Quand je quittais la Normandie,” a kindling colour showed upon the cheeks of her unwillingly rapt and silent dame.

As for La Contessa, who had not until now heard Florence, I don’t believe she could help, heartless as in all truth she was, fumbling for her delicate handful of lace, and confiding to its keeping a sigh.

When the sound ceased, Pauline clasped her hands.

“Heavenly, entrancing, holy!” inter-

jected that flowery conversationalist: "what a treat is in store for Naples!—but we shall be stifled; I must hasten home to interdict the issue of any further cards; no *spazio* would accommodate the hosts who long to fling themselves at your feet."

"Calm your troubled spirit," returned Madeline, smothering her jealous rage, and bursting with spiteful sarcasm; "Miss Hamlyn will not be here to interfere with your arrangements; there is no chance of an alarming pressure on *her* account, Contessa!"

"Eh—what? Are you going to refuse me, Firenze?" inquired the Countess, with appealing and perplexed amaze.

"We return to England in the morning, madame; papa cannot delay his departure; sudden news, fresh despatches—and this reminds me I have much to do—nothing has

yet been seen to. You will excuse me, Contessa, but the day wears apace; farewell!"

And having graced her exit by a courtesy which offered renewed occasion to poor Madeline's monster, Miss Hamlyn left the discomfited Pauline to satisfy herself—if that were possible—of coming events from her sister.

Make sure, the new accession of dignity was introduced, and, now that her step-daughter had ceased from troubling, many egotistic turns were given to the subject. But her audience lent an inattentive ear, *her* plans being *in toto* frustrated, and half made up her mind to adjourn the *soirée*, on the principle of "no song no supper." Disappointment and sullen gloom would brood over her assembly; the card-tables would be early deserted—it was scarcely worth the trouble of dressing!

At last, Pauline kissed her sister, chirped to her pug, and waddled wearily away.

Madeline continued her sofa loll for a few minutes more, then rising with a smile of spiteful play, and scrutinizing her brilliant features in the mirror, sailed from the breakfast-room to superintend her *femme de chambre's* progress, exultant in the defeat of her sister's scheme, and at the abortion of her daughter's triumph.

CHAPTER XII.

A chapter of jumble, all the more true to real life. First, a peep at the Sandys, during that momentous week, when it required Lucy's best efforts to keep Wellesly's rampant hopefulness down, and her own lonely, absent heart in any kind of healthy action. Indeed, Henry had taught her to think him so essential to her peace and happiness, that there were moments now when she blamed her too sisterly breast for suffering such suicidal exile.

When Lucy had prayed her prayers, laid her down to rest, and waxed comfortably warm, these selfish, though perhaps pardon-

able, promptings would oftenest come; in which case, albeit assailed by her innate good sense, their deadliest antagonist was sleep.

But, while thus warring with her own flesh, she never bated in soothing, and if possible steadying, the sky-high anticipations of her brother, who required it. Daily he rose more unreasonably sanguine, and Lucy counselled and frowned in vain. Still she hoped that, should Sir William's application fail, her whispers, hitherto disregarded, would make great head against that weight of disappointment which must otherwise go far to crush him.

Wellesly, in years and education manly, retained that childishness, that inconsiderate confidence, which weighs nothing and hopes all, but which in general has, under the ordeal of school and college life, entirely disappeared.

Behold him consuming whole days in ardent efforts to draw up a satisfactory list of necessities for his Oriental outfit; penning no end of quasi-official documents, in which he had the honour to inform all manner of individuals of all manner of frivolities, and signing himself at least a thousand different ways, but as illegibly as possible, "Wellesly Sandys, Secretary."

At night, when his sister was comforting herself that at length his restless spirit had forgotten itself in slumbers, he would leap from his couch, rekindle his lamp, and batten his imaginings on some Eastern tale; then, suddenly remembering a promise made to Lucy, would close the dainty page, and, hurrying into bed, bury his throbbing forehead in a mass of pillows, to suffocate thought thereby, and throttle wakefulness—and all for Lucy's sake.

Towards morning, with sheer exhaustion, fainting into sleep, his dreams would clothe themselves in Orient garb—houris and peris haunt each glowing scene; but their eyes, as ever, were the mild blue eyes of Lucy, and their smile as her smile.

Hover we an instant at Aunt Ernestine's dressing-table: she handles a hare's-foot; poor puss is bleeding, or it may be *rouge*, which gives to her *toilette* the finishing touch.

Follow we down to the saloon, where Wellesly and his sister skulk behind a statue, and where numbers of *litterati*, principally males, are herding. This being one of Aunt Ernestine's *conversazione* evenings, if you retain your infantile-Regent's-Park-predilections for seeing the *lions* fed, a favourable opportunity is at hand.

The hostess, though not a wealthy, is a

ton-ish woman, and, for the consideration of being admitted to a place on her *role*, two or three wine-merchants submit to be mulcted in champagne: presents of other kinds are unfailingly forthcoming on the day named in her cards, and Aunt Ernestine's *réunions* are voted on all hands the best things of the kind, out and out.

Here may be encountered the prodigies of every clime; Indians, of uncounted lacs, and with teeth and eyes such as English husbands naturally dread; handsomely rigged Moslems, who condescend, on occasion, to forego their prejudices in favour of the interdicted grape, as also to smile upon the Saxon maids, infidels though they be.

Here John Chinaman shows his tail, and John Bull his nose; while the Continent sends its *petits-mâîtres* and *improvisatori* to complete the *mélange* of talent and noto-

riety. Every one is either famous or infamous — sometimes both; and the ladies might be Cyprians, for the *negligé* of their dress, and *abandon* of their general style.

A prodigious display of *bons mots*, *jeux d'esprit*, chat of the day, and criticism, intermingled with a popping, in mysterious corners, of corks, and relieved at intervals by the rattle of dice — *conversazione'd*, of course, into *aleæ*—reduced Lucy, followed by her brother, to the necessity of slipping away.

Classic groups were forming of Graces and Apollos, nymphs and fawns, round *roulette* and other more modern sports, while the dashing Ernestine was discussing, with some hairy exquisite, a recent painting of the Etty school, whose pretensions to subdued colouring or sufficient drapery were slight; but its *connoisseurs*, having the Pan-

theon by heart, knew it was Venus, and that Venus wore bare skin.

Lucy shuddered as she left the scene.

“ You looked rather out of your element in that menagerie, dear,” said Wellesly, softly, when released. “ Come and sit in my room; we will talk about Bridlestone—and Lawrenceville,” added he, unwittingly.

A blush was her reply, in the darkness unseen.

We shall visit their conversation’s site, and first Bridlestone. Nothing has changed in Sir William’s establishment since our last interview, save that a greater influx of visitors prognosticates Easter, and Mrs. Longfellow’s husband wanes daily to his end. Miss Price, perhaps, is more benignly prim, having a huge mass of housekeeping to conduct, at once her duty and delight.

I hope none of you consider this spinster mad, for you are wrong; or *queer*, for you are scarcely right: I can assure you that the one striking peculiarity for which she is liable to attack—her unornamented head—should be set down to *old-maidishness alone*.

Some of this venerable class display their distinctive colours by a devotion to dogs, tea, and gossip—so did not Miss Price; some by an antipathy for children, lovers, and mankind—Miss Price liked every one; and some by an independence in matters of conventional fastidiousness, such as personal decoration, fashion: of this class she was; and, in certain regions of the world, by the same capricious chance, had been, for what you term her oddness, *à la mode*.

To return: Sir William, given to hospitality in its completest sense, smiles nightly at the centre of his long and groaning

table, drinking wine in regular succession, and in defiance of modern rules, with every guest male. Yet do his matutinal habits never fail him: he is up, if not with the lark, in time to liberate Boadicea, Cleopatra, and Co., and occupies himself, until within an hour of breakfast, studying their phases of character, and duly selecting their eggs.

Sir William has a pony, upon which Miss Price, in more elastic years, was wont to ride, but which is now too vicious for any purpose, either of saddle or draught. The Rosinante's tendencies are displayed in a habit of kicking back, and generally with some effect, at the unwary passer-by. Curious to relate, however, the master attributes this weakness to some constitutional disorder, and not to its actual cause, a defective education: with the hope, therefore,

to effect a cure, a poultice of laudanum is applied with unflinching regularity every night, and a strong infusion of Peruvian bark mingled in its daily allowance of water.

“The result must be gradual,” Sir William says: and it *is* very gradual.

A like solicitude extends itself to almost all the members of his dumb animal list; and, in extreme anxiety for their sanitary welfare, he is apt to imagine the existence of a disorder of which there are but trifling symptoms.

On this principle alone can be explained the numerous cases of seemingly crippled, blind, halt, and otherwise maimed bipeds and quadrupeds, with which Sir William's yards are literally alive. At every step you encounter a cow or pig, dog or cat, with probably a couple of legs bound up in

splinters, or with a crutch, and making terrible complaint to get free—a part, however, he says, of their disorder.

Here and there you are run down by a blinded sheep, butting along in darkness, and wearing a turban of cloths to protect its eyes, Sir William having discovered unusual infirmity in those organs.

I can never forget the sight of an old St. John's dog, with his huge bushy tail fastened up by a string stretching over his back, and tied round his throat: any thing more grotesque it were impossible to imagine. On my consulting its owner as to his motive for this treatment—

“At Sambo's time of life,” he replied, “it is evident that the tail must be too heavy for its own support: I have therefore divided the weight, and he scarcely feels it now.”

“Scarcely feels it!” thought I: “never did canine expression evince a more fish-out-of-water condition.”

But expostulation was vain. A keeper assured me, in confidence, that one of the pointer ladies having grown somewhat lumpy and shapeless, from the effects of a large family, it was resolved to remedy the deformity by putting her into stays: for this purpose, Miss Price—ever ready at her “darling Willy’s” beck—was induced to negotiate with her London corset maker; but that female requiring a pattern, and Sir William, after various trials, being forced to admit that, in this case, no ordinary rules of measurement would apply, the project was abandoned, and the pointer bandaged, in lieu, into an apoplexy.

On numerous occasions, Mrs. Longfellow, who was fond of a carriage drive, having

ordered the vehicle, and bonnetted and cloaked, was met on the door-steps by a footman, to announce from her brother that, one of the horses showing unmistakeable sign of foul tongue, she must postpone her exercise, as the animal was under medical treatment. Indeed, so often did this happen, that in fine the lady purchased a pair of nags for herself, with which Sir William was never permitted to interfere; and which, much to his astonishment, never fell sick.

Thus far of the Baronet's hobby. You will like to hear a word or two about Norah. She and Mrs. Longfellow have been going over the hamlet this morning with Anthony Blake, and I never saw the curate in higher spirits: laughing being catching, no wonder; for his younger companion is brimful of frolic, tittering like a school-girl, and

blushing whenever she encounters his mild little eyes.

Anthony loves a stile to-day, first assisting Mrs. Longfellow over it with much befitting gravity, and then proceeding to assure Norah that she need have no fear of falling, to give him her hand; which that lady, balancing herself on the upper bar, considers a piece of clerical wit, a *double entendre*, and resents accordingly, by a shake of her head, and an exhibition of her pretty feet, all thorough-bred *Irlandaises*, or Irish daisies, possessing—we mean no offence—diminutive *understandings*.

The curate, captivated altogether, seems strangely unprepared for the *duties* of their visitation, and Mrs. Longfellow finds some difficulty in keeping him to his work.

Passing along a coppice, they come into sight of Lawrenceville House, and an in-

stant change in poor Blake's physiognomy takes place.

Norah perceiving it, but ignorant of its true cause, accuses herself of reserve, and intends to be doubly pleasant; but it is quite lost on him, for—his thoughts are with Mrs. Lawrence!

CHAPTER XIII.

And so we come to Lawrenceville, where great changes are in progress, Greenspur and mother having arrived. This latter old beldame, deaf and frail, but crafty, makes believe her dear Herold to be the most exemplary of mortals, quite a paragon for virtue and godliness. Mrs. Lawrence, wearing a face of elation and righteous triumph, meets her ill-starred daughter alone.

“Well, Hélena, my love, where are the beard and moustaches? And so you have been mistaken, after all;—I think you will credit your mother the next time; and I

really hope you feel ashamed of yourself, after thus calumniating and backbiting an innocent man."

"*I* was mistaken, certainly, or *he* is changed," calmly answered Hélena.

"Changed, did you say?" retorted her mother, fiercely; "and so you yet retain your wilful prejudice? Learn, madam! that unless the hand of Providence interpose to prevent it, you shall be the wedded wife of this worthy Christian warrior within a fortnight: I have already arranged it with his mother, and this very evening all shall be explained to himself.

"Hélena," she added, with tragic emphasis, "you are loved, nay, idolized, by Greenspur; your fortune, recollect, is mine to withhold or give: obey *me*, and you shall be happy; disobey, and I have power to make you wretched!

“Trifle, then, no longer with your best interests; the young man’s mother tells me that on her death he falls into an estate of many thousands a-year; squander not such golden prospects on the mere unfounded caprice of your evil-prompting heart; nay, even for your own sake, who rave madly for the excitement and freedom of that profitless sphere in which you have been reared, consider that, while the world and the things of the world are shut out from the unpretending retirement of *my* house, under *your own* roof you may introduce, should Satan take such hold upon your mind, those vanities and pomps which God has strengthened me to discard. On all accounts, Miss Lawrence, it is meet, right, and your bounden duty, to yield obedience in this as in every matter to your parent; but if, in the blindness of infidelity, you re-

sist my prayerful, heaven-directed choice, I can hold out to you no prospect of happiness, either in this world or that which is to come!"

Having thus spoken, she marched with unflinching dignity from the apartment.

These were strong words of Mrs. Lawrence's, and Hélena had never undergone the *anathema maranatha* before, though Elinor and Susan were accustomed to its thunder.

At this moment, however, of doubt and darkness, Henry tapped gently at the door, and, waiting no answer, entered noiselessly the room. But his shadow fell on its floor; she started, and looked round; their eyes met, and with a deep moan she threw herself upon his neck.

How long, how tender, and how speak-

ing, that embrace! Words could not say more, and Hélena but unlocked her arms to leave him.

Pursue we Mrs. Lawrence, not with the morbid motives which tempt our commons to crowd around the Brownriggs and the Sloanes—no; but further to unravel our story.

This rigid moralist is recovering composure under the narcotic influence of a manuscript pamphlet, the workmanship of Greenspur, and professing to treat of humble piety, its title being, “The Awakened Shoe-black.” But hark! one or two clipped words are heard praying admission from without, which being vouchsafed, Fanchon enters.

“It is de fine day, madame!” began the bonne, with a bland courtesy and smile.

“What do you want, Fanchon?” asked the widow, taking no notice of the weather.

“Ma’mselle vill take her money, if you please,” said the envoy, looking most innocently sheepish.

“Violette is a little goose!” returned her aunt, considerably nettled. “Why, whatever has put *this* into her head?—tell her she cannot touch her money until she has a husband and son; and desire her from me not to talk nonsense! Money, indeed! I wonder what she wants with more? I’m sure I am thankful that the will was made as it is, the silly girl! Now you may go, Fanchon.”

“Mon Dieu, von husband and von son! Mais avec votre permission, madame, dat is vat I say to ma’mselle, vat you vant with money?—madame give you too mooch everyting.”

Which timeous soft-solder having its desired effect, Mrs. Lawrence looked pleased.

“Will you ask Ma’m selle Violette to make one of our party at dinner this evening, Fanchon? Master Henry will be pleased to see her, and we have an excellent and devout officer sojourning amongst us, to whom I would fain introduce her.”

“Un officier—quel agrément! He will marry mees Hélène, you tink, madame?”

“Very probably, but don’t swear.”

Our resigned though somewhat illiterate friend, having no knowledge of foreign tongues, suspected the *bonne* of too warm an exclamation, which protested, she resumed.

“Does my niece talk much about Master Henry, Fanchon?—they used to be great friends.”

“Ma’m selle love Monsieur Henri ver mooch, but he not love back again. Ah, non; he love Mees Sandees, I tink!”

This the envoy ventured as a feeler.

"Miss Fiddlestick!" retorted the widow, contemptuously.

"Vat you call her, madame?" inquired the bonne, with well-acted stupidity.

Mrs. Lawrence, after waving a reply, and reflecting on the clever, energetic character of her questioner, began to feel that, were Fanchon's influence brought to bear upon Hélène on the side of Greenspur, all resistance might be readily overcome.

"Fanchon," said the widow, impressively.

"Oui, madame," returned the maid, with a matchlessly submissive shudder.

"Can you keep a secret?"

"Un secret!—oh, oui, I can keep."

"Then listen," quickly replied the widow.

"I want, as you know, to marry Miss Hélène to this officer: *he* is willing, re-

member *that* ; but should *she* be so mad as to refuse him, do you think you can help us to bring her round?"

"Bah! mais c'est tout-à-fait impossible!" cried Fanchon, hopelessly.

"Well, then, say no more about it, that's all," said the widow, resuming her studies, in defeat.

The *bonne* had reached the door, opened it, and was loitering at its handle, apparently immersed in reflection, when, slipping back again, and standing behind the reader's chair, she stooped forward to whisper.

"What you give?"

"What do you ask?" answered Mrs. Lawrence, looking up resignedly, but hoping it might not be much.

"A hunder poun'," was the prompt and bold reply.

“No less?” muttered the widow, trying to drive a hard bargain.

“No less!” coarsely repeated the envoy, who felt that the game was her own.

“It is yours, if you succeed within a fortnight,” said Mother Lawrence, calmly.

“Ver’ well; I will try.”

And Fanchon was gone.

Our previous acquaintance with Mrs. Lawrence’s economic principles will certify that she would not lightly part with her coin, and only came out thus munificently with a view to profit by it in the end. What was even this respectable sum, when weighed in the balance against the gallant captain’s money-bags? and if it effected the desired junction, would it have been spent in vain?—thus she ruminated, and therefore she agreed.

At this stage of our revelation, it is un-

necessary to explain the origin of Violette's pecuniary demand, further than that her prime mover was the *bonne*. Anon we shall fathom the whole affair.

As regards the bribery question, it may be added that Fanchon's services were already enlisted on the same side by the manly, straightforward suitor, who, prowling about Lawrenceville's shaded walks at a late hour on the preceding night, *of course* in a religiously contemplative mood, fell in with a muffled party of three, the majority being females, but of whom one only stood her ground, and this one was Fanchon. Having seen Greenspur walking under the windows during the day, she recognized him in the twilight.

It was quite in his line of country, too, however his mother and Mrs. Lawrence may have otherwise supposed, to sift out

and follow up an affair of gallantry, such as this might warrant him in believing it to be; therefore, stepping noiselessly towards the *bonne*, who had turned to face him, he said, in his most silvery tones:

“A beautiful clear night, miss; but don’t you feel it cold?”

“Non, monsieur; love is de hot,” was her reply, carelessly and loud.

“So you’re in love, are you, my dear?” he resumed, discovering the foreign accent and morality of the stranger.

“Are *you*?” asked Fanchon, bantering him coarsely.

“I?—by no manner of means; never was, m’amie!”

“Den vat for you come here?”

“To study astronomy, and look for glow-worms, ma’m selle.”

“I not mean dat; why you come to mi-

lady's house?" And she peered deeply into his eyes for answer.

Now, Greenspur, with all his knavery and *sang froid*, being no match for the *bonne*, began to suspect as much: and, anxious at once to escape her badgering, and to discover, if possible, the position and object of his new acquaintance, he merely said:

"Oh, I am on a visiting tour with my mother; but permit me in return to inquire whose are those raven locks, those brilliant glances, glowing cheeks?"

And as he spoke, his fingers were insinuating themselves amorously into the brazen figure's palm.

"Bah!" she returned, pushing him off; "vous plaisantez, monsieur. I am de old *bonne* of Ma'mselle Violette de Merton."

"Is Ma'mselle Violette Mrs. Lawrence's niece?" asked Greenspur.

“Mais oui, et elle est vraiment jolie!”

“As pretty as her cousin?” he continued.

“Vat cousine?”

“Miss Hélène, to be sure.”

“Ah ! Je le comprends; and so, monsieur came here for Hélène. You see I find out.” And, with a provoking laugh, she shook her finger in his face.

“What would you like?” asked Greenspur, after a pause, and in a low, deep-meaning voice, as, drawing her to him, he laid his hand upon the vixen’s shoulder.

There is a freemasonry between rogues, and Fanchon rather tartly replied:

“Vy, money, to be sure!”

“It shall be yours—you know the terms.”

“I not know nothing,” answered the bonne, cunningly goading him to a confession.

Disgusted and discomfited, the officer turned away.

“Monsieur,” interjected Fanchon, solemnly.

“Well?”

“Vat do you seek now—parole d’honneur?”

“Hélène Lawrence,” he muttered quickly.

“And madame not permet?”

“Oh, madame is most willing, but Hélène herself—what if she should hate me?”

“Bah!—what for you care?—you want to marry Ma’mselle Hélène?”

“I do.”

“Ver well, I can get—one week—no more.” And Fanchon curtsied to move on.

“Stay,” he interposed; “is it true she will be rich?”

“Ah, too mooch riche—too mooch! Il faut dat she shall be one grande héritière.”

This was sheer conjecture on the *bonne's* part, but essential to her prospects of reward.

"Good night," returned Greenspur, blandly, as he placed in her hand a purse well lined with notes, by way of encouragement, then adding:

"But tell me, who were your companions when I first caught sight of you?—a little bit of fun, eh?"

"Mais, vat?—I not tink you see nobody," was her reply, delivered with admirable *naïveté*.

"Ah, you won't confess, I suppose—Master Harry and the kitchen-maid—something of that sort, eh?"

Fanchon smiled, and feigned confusion: she led him to believe he had hit it to a T, and they parted. It was Violette with her French groom!

Start not, reader, nor think it an unnatural, or forced, or unlikely case: only reflect for a moment that, while I mention the *results* of unfortunate Violette's training, all *details* of her gradually progressive fall are veiled or hidden from view. Of a long and terrible beginning you witness but the end. Were I to open the history of vice, and, with the minuteness of prurient sensuality, to reveal each hideous and revolting page, the insidious evil would proclaim its own victory, bringing sickening conviction home to every heart; but because I have purposely avoided such recital—a recital which must be harrowing to the pure, and to the impure but a further dose of poison, deem not my brevity unreasonably brief, nor *her* perdition either sudden or unprecedented.

CHAPTER XIV.

I have told you something of Ma'mselle de Merton before: I have, in a manner, in the most reserved and general terms, prepared you for the worst; I spoke of her *bonne*, her constant, indeed her only, companion—for, jealous of the affections and very presence of Violette, she tolerated no rival; how blindly Mrs. Lawrence bore Fanchon's ascendancy; how the orphan was permitted to isolate herself from her relatives, to live in a world, a most polluted world, of her own framing, its sole inhabitants herself and her retainers; further, how

her naturally wild spirits, strong passions, and careless principles, were left to follow such direction as Fanchon might happen to exemplify; how books were provided, whose contents, rank with indecent grossness, represented but so much paper currency of the bank of hell; and, lastly, how the woman who was mother, and preceptor, and every thing, to her neglected, ill-omened youth, had herself strayed from the path of virtue.

Fanchon, indeed, had drunk deeply from the unhallowed fountains of sin, passed her early life in the ranks of infamy, low debauchery, parti-coloured crime; and only attained to her present post by the callous indifference of, in the first instance, Violette's father, who from the condition of kept mistress elevated her to the rank of *bonne*, and in the second instance Mrs.

Lawrence, who confirmed her in that office, without any inquiry into her former habits, or any supervision of her personal qualities, as recognizable in her new sphere.

There was a depth of villany in this menial which I care not to account for, even to probe: lapsed past reclaim herself, she seemed to take a strange, demoniacal delight in compassing the ruin of others: from some such feeling she had instructed Violette, poor, thoughtless child! in every branch of folly, and, having carried her thus far, from sheer bitterness of devilment—I find no better word—became her tempter!

But no more: we will fly from the fearful contemplation of so much happiness doomed, youth contaminated, corroded, waylaid, and cut down; nor had ever approached the subject, but to present Mrs.

Lawrence at all points, in all lights, as she was.

When this motherless mongrel first arrived from the pleasant land of France, and first looked imploringly with its large dark eyes on the stern, cold, calculating lady who was to be its guardian—that blue-black satin economist, that unrelaxing devotee, arranged within her secret breast the brilliant match aforesaid, into which mutual affection might enter, or not, just as it pleased, but by which Violette's fortune would return to the house of Lawrence; and with this project ever full before her eyes, she saw nothing else, and let things sidle along just as they might.

As for the parties themselves, they were to be but the rooks or cards to *her* game; for Mrs. Lawrence, though decidedly Low Church in her principles, inculcated that

passive obedience, that submission to the fountain-head, which is said to distinguish the Society of Jesus.

No course of reasoning, no appeal, could bend her from her purpose, not even wheedling—the most powerful of all engines in domestic strategy—as, being above such a weakness, she never made *pets* of her children; they were severally but so many fragments of the family machine, which she might regulate as she listed, but which were utterly cessate when her hand refused its motive and connecting power.

Here terrorism came to her aid: she had eschewed all the parade of life; established an abstemious code amongst her household subjects; contributed, for a period of at least thirty years, the annual sum of twenty pounds to the village school; “drilled,” to use her own words, “her offspring into a

band of Christian warriors"—you never saw, with all their drill, a more unwarlike couple than Elinor and Susan; lavished countless tracts—not of *land*, but of *print*—of a most searching and ghostly import, upon the poor; “devoted her first-born”—her expression—to the duties of the Sunday class; in short, discountenanced vice, rewarded virtue, and established for herself the reputation of one who had quite given up *this* world, in anticipation of the next, and, as being entirely too good for the terrestrial stage, had bidden it an eternal farewell.

Reverence and solemnity were thus intimately associated with all that she did and was *out of doors*, and, reflected on the bearing of those around her hearth, propped up, in no small measure, her despotism.

Sir William and Miss Price, who visited

her about once in the year, but whose civility she was much too pre-eminently pious to return, looked upon her as a home-made fakir or durweesh, or something in that absorbed, entranced, ecstatic style; and theirs was the general opinion, against which, barring certain doubts on the part of Henry and the novice, an internal qualm from Blake, and a "strictly private and confidential" infidelity between Violette and the bonne, dissent had never entered an objection, except in the case of our *unmalevolent*, temperate, and charitable Mrs. Longfellow; and she, while she estimated the widow's cold-drawn godliness at a low figure, *privately*, did so from perceiving, but without impertinent research, for which she was far too generous, that on the very face of Mrs. Lawrence's saintliness existed such anti-Christian carelessness, such self-righ-

teousness, such fierce profession, but so little practice, as to contradict, anomalize, and render nugatory, her entire system.

About this time, moreover, reports very serious and very damaging to the moral character of some of the inmates of Lawrenceville began to go the hamlet's rounds: still they were unwillingly or partially believed, and in many instances scouted altogether.

All that Mrs. Longfellow was able, in denial, to advance, was a hope, an eager, but not a sanguine hope, that they might prove untrue. She had *seen* nothing further than the others, but, valuing the widow's tactics below their current standard, she feared that they were calculated rather to foster than prevent those evils reported to exist, and which none could deplore more bitterly than herself.

We allude to the conduct of Violette and her French servants, conduct too publicly manifested in their drives and rides to escape the honest animadversion of each passing boor, yet so veiled by the elder woman's villanously perfect dissimulation, and so obstructed in its progress to general odium by the unguardianlike apathy of Mrs. Lawrence, as to revel, in its unchecked, unvisited pollution, to the injury—not of the wretched and neglected orphan's character, for *that* was lost for ever—but of that reputation for purity which had so long fenced in the foibles and errors of her aunt, and which injury, reflected through the austere disciplinarian, must bring ill odour on those principles behind which she screened the grave defects of her method—defects so fraught with ruin to all within their reach!

But what had Mrs. Lawrence to dread?

Was not Violette constantly present at the Saturday lecture, there to imbibe sound doctrine? Was she not busied during the week preparing for the duties of that day, and duly putting its lessons in practice? Did not Henry drive her with punctilious regularity to church? Was she not deluged, steeped to the lips, in tracts? Surely, then, her religious, and consequently moral, training were so far from disregarded—if any thing, over-done!

As for secular education, beyond the alphabet and grammar, which were needful to ensure a proper initiation into “the mysteries of revelation”—as the widow generalized all works of a scriptural kind—nothing was deemed requisite, and nothing was done.

A similar treatment had been adopted towards Elinor and Susan; but, while in

their cases the object in view was obtained, in that of Violette a widely different result was already maturing its nauseous fruit. Mrs. Lawrence could see no reason why like causes, operating on *unlike* dispositions, should not produce like effects; so she took it for granted that all went right, and resigned herself, as usual, to indolent unconcern.

It was the ungrateful custom with Henry—ungrateful to both parties, but observed by the widow's express command—daily to visit his so-called *affiancée*, Fanchon being always present, and the interview lasting but a nominal time.

By this the old lady thought to preserve that mutual devotion, the intensity of which she had never allowed herself to question; and son and niece equally, though from discrepant motives, resolved that the *real*

state of affairs should indefinitely remain a profound secret. Sometimes, indeed, she met the dissemblers with an abrupt interrogatory—

“When will my dears complete *their* engagement and *my* happiness? You are surely, both of you, sufficiently adult to undertake the responsible duties of marriage!”

Yet hitherto they had managed, one way or another, to put her off.

Now, as regards his cousin's criminal course, do you think that, after he began to suspect it himself, he should have broached it to his mother? You all say yes; but, alas! you little know that mother! She would have wept, and stormed, and raved, and—*insisted on their immediate union!*

No matter how debased, no matter how irrevocably fallen, though she were a com-

monest of the common, Violette was inheritress of £10,000 a-year, or her son would claim it; and if she were wedded to other than Henry, £10,000 a-year must leave Lawrenceville for ever!

Now, though the widow's heir would have witnessed its alienation without a sigh, the widow's self would rather have expired than permitted it. No; Mrs. Lawrence, after a vast deal of whimpering, no end of sleepless nights, and with a synod of wrinkles, would have hushed up the matter, silenced Fanchon, Grignon, and Co., on a pension, and forced our noble-hearted, high-principled, pure-minded, Henry into a union with the vitiated being he loathed!

And would Henry submit to this? He must, or break his mother's heart; and *therefore* he held back, and *not* from any feeling of *self-interest*, albeit he made sure

that the catastrophe would lead to his disinherison and exile.

This filial repugnance to overwhelm his mother's reason, perhaps to cause her death, restrained him: behind it, indeed, self-respect and personal honour lay armed to the teeth to do him service; but only as a last appeal would he arouse them; at the present he required no aid.

Nor, it must be understood, was the young man aware of those irremediable lengths to which, by the fatal impetus of her profligacy, his relative had gone: he was merely furnished with vague, though well-grounded, evidence of her studies and tastes; of the characters of her maid and groom; of their intimacy with her, and unrestricted access to her apartments: he knew, in fact, enough to protect himself; and fervently he hoped there was nothing more to know.

CHAPTER XV.

A week has passed by, and Hélena, invited by Violette, under the instructions of Fanchon, is a daily visiter in her cousin's rooms, and more cheerful than of late: let us review.

On the afternoon of the day of Mrs. Lawrence's understanding with the *bonne*, a polite message was conveyed by this latter female, hoping Miss Hélena would favour Ma'mselle de Merton with her company to tea.

It is but fair to poor Hélena to remind you that up to this moment no rumour affecting the good report of her entertainers—for Fanchon always drank tea with her

charge—had directly or remotely aroused a suspicion. She knew they were very like French people, which was natural, and very unlike English people, which was also natural; and, while she had but little intimacy with them, that little rather led her to covet still less, though for the life of her she could not tell why: whatever appeared unusual or unaccountable went down to the score of their being French, yet nothing like impropriety had she ever seen.

The invitation was accepted.

“Any change,” thought *Hélène*, “to kill time.”

Imagine her surprise when, entering *Violette*’s reception-room, her eyes fell upon the meek and closely-shaven countenance of *Greenspur*. He was conversing in fluent French with his little hostess, who sat on a sofa beside him, becomingly arrayed in a

negligé toilette of *cerise* flannel, with wide loose sleeves, from which her smooth and rounded arms, escaping so far as their elbows, were manacled by many gold bracelets representing snakes, and glancing with precious stones.

Fanchon prepared the drinkables.

“Ah, voila, Ma’mselle Hélène, so beautiful!” sounded the *bonne*, with a rapturous smile and courtesy.

Violette sprung from her seat, and flinging herself upon her cousin’s unresisting breast, cried quite loud enough for stage effect:

“A thousand thanks!—this is great happiness to us all.”

Last advanced Greenspur, who, being met by a very frigid bow, thought it better to retreat, and accordingly took up his former position.

“Vacate, capitaine, please you; I will

have Hélena beside me : or see, let me sit between you : now we shall manage delightfully."

Thus added Violette, who, under the promptings of the *bonne*, brought, with the most perfect *empressement*, the lady and her suitor together, though not sufficiently close to alarm the delicacy of the former.

Greenspur, a thorough man of the world, well travelled and well informed, had hitherto been seen by Hélena only in the presence of their respective mothers, wearing his hideous mask of Puritan-like hypocrisy, which, though she scarcely understood it truly, repelled and disgusted her. But here he was presented in quite a different and very much more attractive light, *not as he really was, but in his most becoming disguise.*

Insensibly, yet irresistibly, she found herself, during that liveliest and fleetest of

evenings, yielding to the fascination of his brilliant and polished address.

We have said that Hélena was highly gifted, and that her education had been seen to; it will, therefore, readily occur to our readers that, when tastes and acquirements of equal calibre and variety were, after the dreary interval succeeding her return to Lawrenceville, again and unexpectedly encountered; when, after weeks of deathlike *ennui* and gloom, a meteor, whose brightness might well blind, burst from behind the cloud which, for reasons of its own, had hitherto screened it; when, from his richly-stored mind—a mind rank alike with luxuriant weeds and flowers, but of which it served his turn just now to display the flowers alone—he drew a ravishing profusion of all that was most sweet, most graceful, most likely to charm, to lull, to

take effect; it will readily be granted that the result was but true to nature, and to a woman's nature, above all.

When the party was about to break up, Greenspur, bending with eloquent gravity, pressed to his lips the dimpled hand of Hélena, unhindered!

Miss Lawrence, having kissed Violette warmly, said something kind to Fanchon, and engaged herself for the same hour—and she hoped, actually she did, the same company—to-morrow evening, tripped with unwonted sprightliness to bed.

Once gone, the *bonne* ran up to Greenspur, and slapping him on the cheek, hoarsely articulated:

“Boucher, you have snare de lamb.”

“I don't care a damn for *her*, you fool—it's *her money*,” was his sulky reply.

As for the victim, she woke next day to

discard the idea, now grown untenable and monstrous, that this refined and lively *militaire* had any part or lot with that execrable manœuvrer of the moustachios and grizzly beard. What a goose she dubbed herself to have *ever* confounded them!

“But how am I to account for the change to Henry?” ruminated Hélena; “and what a droll, wicked wretch Greenspur is, to sham so much piety before mamma; nay, he humbugs his own mother as well!”

She actually tittered aloud: it was evidently all up with every species of objection; she had crossed the Rubicon, and no longer was her own.

A week having passed, we come to the goal of our *resumé*; ere a fortnight goes round she is his bride!

“Non, ma’m selle; de old hen say you not get no money?”

“No money?—why *ma tante* told me long ago that I should have a large fortune.”

“*Oui, mais* you must be *marié* first, and have one *fil*s before.”

“A son before I’m married?” cried Violette, laughingly misinterpreting her *bonne*’s indifferent English.

“Non; you *comprends* vat I mean ver’ ouell.”

She continued her exposition in French, much as she had learned it from the widow.

“But *why* is this?” demanded ma’m selle, pettishly, upon hearing her statement; “am I too young?”

“*Non, non*, dat is not for vy; it is de *vill*, madame say,” replied Fanchon.

“N’importe!” resumed the other, after a brief silence; “we shall not be hindered thereby; I am dying to get back to France, *la belle patrie de ma naissance*, Fanchon!

dying to see Paris, and most of all, resolved to see Lawrenceville no more: you will come, *ma bonne*, and Grignon; and look," she continued, turning up her sleeves, "I have all my mother's jewels; these diamonds, rubies, sapphires, are worth many thousand *livres*; there are more besides in my casket; we can and must go, Fanchon."

"You vill *make* money, *ma chere*!" answered the brutal woman, with a leer.

Violette blushed—she sometimes blushed still. Let us leave them.

CHAPTER XVI.

Let us vote the Hamlyns arrived in town. Sir William and Miss Price have dissolved their rural festivities, and adjourned to Eaton Square to entertain them. Wellesly and Lucy are *en suite*, and the former, aware of his appointment, is utterly wild.

Evening has come on; a large and distinguished party begins to assemble in the Baronet's drawing-rooms; and Miss Price has actually, although under protest, been persuaded by Lucy to appear in a cap; an unpretentious one, of course, without flowers, and guiltless of foreign manufac-

ture, the spinster having stipulated, as the cost of her obedience, that Lucy's own hands should fashion it.

Wax lights and gay exotics, brilliant robes, dazzling uniforms, glowing faces, and high-sounding names, preside.

Madeline, in ruby velvet and pearls, with Marabout feathers fastened in her braided back hair, sails consciously about, more splendid than ever. All glasses are turned to admire her: all glasses I have written, for the majority of our English *dilettanti* is near-sighted—a curious aristocratic fact.

Lucy is there, wearing a white *crêpe* dress, with bunches of apple blossom nodding their cheerful heads as they peep from behind her ears and sport upon her neck. She looks, we need scarcely add, lady-like and pretty; and Miss Price cannot help kissing her, every now and then,

when nobody is nigh, with sheer admiration.

Wellesly, in great blow, and ludicrously alive to his new calling, follows the General everywhere. It is a question to this day, whether he had not provided some convenient writing-table with stationery, in case of being summoned, during the evening, to take down notes. Lucy cannot restrain a smile, as she sees him marching in the rear, with an eye for nobody else, and his face portraying every species of ineffable delight. Sir William coming over to make the same remark, they have a good laugh at him together.

The Longfellows and Miss Burton are not visible, being still at Bridlestone: Norah would not be happy, I dare say, any other where, just now.

But behold the Montgomeries; for no

one could enter the rooms without remarking them: mamma rigged out in something crimson, and sporting a demi-cap with golden fringes, serving to conceal the foundation on which are built those ponderous ringlets that float in all directions round her neck. Fanny and Clara being, as their mother says, "in different styles," are not attired alike, the former having a profusion of amber below and not much of anything above her waist, and the latter wearing the pinky hues of an unassuming daisy.

But where is Florence? Just as we ask, she comes—comes as beautiful a being as admiration ever knelt to worship—comes to fill every eye, check every laugh, change every conversation, rivet and enchant all. Yes; her implacable step-mother actually forgot herself so far as to turn her massive person quite round, and stare with no com-

mon envy at the loveliness which thus late poured its radiant halo o'er the scene.

Detained up-stairs by the disappointing *modiste*, Florence had unwittingly given that chance of captivation to the surrounding fair, of which her arrival left them that night no further hope: it was, in fact, impossible that an impression could be made by the most expert *magiciennes*, so long as Miss Hamlyn's superior brightness was there, to "pale their ineffectual fire." In despair, they gave up, and admired her.

Rapidly she glided to Miss Price's side, where room was found between that venerable spinster and Lucy Sandys.

It is necessary here to mention that the Sandys had arrived early on that forenoon, but that Wellesly, having an engagement with a College friend, was absent during

dinner, and only returned in time for the assembly.

General Hamlyn, while whispering with a noble lord, whose Ministerial functions necessitated a confidential undertone, caught sight of his daughter's *entrée*, and, breaking away as civilly and as soon as possible, hastened, with a face of the utmost pride and pleasure, to her side—Wellesly, as a matter of course, pursuing.

“Better late than never, Flo’: but what a fine dress this is! mighty grand, by Jove!”

The Secretary looked up to see her; their eyes met; those large, deep, violet-tinted eyes lit upon him; that face, redolent with every charm of sunny youth, was turned to meet him; that form, with its grace and elegance, its dignity and ease, was there before him; he lost himself, lost

himself altogether! He could have fallen down and made a spread-eagle of his first-sight devotion at her feet: he was unmanned.

Florence must have noticed it, she smiled, such a sweet, assuring, welcome smile!

The General gave her his arm, and turned to move away: in doing so, he came against his stricken, bewildered scribe.

“Ah! you here, Mr. Sandys! Florence, allow me to introduce one of our future helpmates, one of the party for C——; Mr. Sandys, Miss Hamlyn.”

“Do you like the idea of going abroad, Mr. Sandys?” asked his mesmeriser, softly.

“Above everything!” bolted out poor Wellesly, overwhelmed; to which the lady bowed slightly, and passed on.

One of their party! *her* friend! to live under the same roof! to sit by her side at

table—perhaps to ride and drive with her! at any rate, to see her every day! What luxury, happiness, heaven!

These, and a thousand other thoughts, welled out of his overflowing heart, to the verge of suffocation. No wonder that he continued to dodge the General's footsteps now!

It is later in the evening: the bulk of the company having departed, a few friends gather round the piano, which is open, and on which candles burn, though no performer has yet appeared.

There is a lull—people whisper short nothings to each other; whilst in an outer room a group of mimic wranglers wax earnest, if not loud, whose movements are watched with considerable and apparent interest by the low-voiced loiterers within.

This incident is explained by the result:

Florence Hamlyn, surrounded by Miss Price, Lucy, the General, and, consequently, the General's secretary, enters the inner apartment, and, glancing at her assembled audience, takes her seat on the music-chair.

Having played a few bars of prelude, she began: at first you might scarcely hear a sound, but it grew by degrees to an utterance so clear, so passionate, so wild, that the Priestess herself never prayed with more rapt emotion, more desire.

It was Norma's "Casta Diva" which she sang; and, in defiance of scene, and dress, and every hindrance, Florence *was* Norma for the time!

Rising from her seat, she turned away: there rose no sound of praise; it was *above all praise*. People merely bade good night noiselessly, and retired; Madeline lighted

to her *boudoir* by the duteous Pilkington, Lucy and Miss Price moving off together, and Florence having already gone.

But what of Wellesly? Our impressionable friend *did* reach his chamber, but in altogether a distracted and alarming state: he tried to undress; tut! it was hopeless, quite: he could only stand at the fire-place, lean his chin upon his wrist, shut his eyes, and rave and wonder.

Morning found him standing there; sleep was out of the question.

If she had been plain, or ordinary, and sang thus—but that was impossible; or if she had been beautiful and interesting, and superior, as she was, to every other mortal, and could *not* sing—but such beauty and such melody *together!* Such a girl, and such a voice! Oh, it was overwhelming, undoing, downright desperation!

We can make nothing of him in this humour, and must excuse ourselves interfering during the ensuing three weeks of his and the Hamlyns' stay in England, all save the final day, which has arrived.

On the previous evening, a Saturday, Sir William and Miss Price, Sir Geoffry, Lady and Miss Hamlyn, Lucy and Wellesly, and Pilkington, travelled by train to Southampton, and billeted at Radley's, to be ready to go on board ship the next morning early.

Five of the party, the outward bound, were in high glee; the rest, with every effort to be cheerful, showed much more inclination to mourn. Still, they had a pleasant dinner of it, Florence captivating Lucy by praising her brother's good looks, and Lucy assuring Florence, in turn, that never in any instance had so indelible an

impression been made on the secretary's heart as by *her*. Why, even now, at the end of three weeks, his *furore* was not abated one whit—a fact totally unprecedented in Wellesly's natural history, and which Florence must therefore consider a compliment of the first class.

Lucy and Florence, though recent were warm friends: the former being prized by the latter for her lady-like, gentle manners, excellent temper, and sense; the latter dear to the former for her high and noble bearing, her contempt of every mean display—such as young ladies with a tithe of her advantages are prone to—and her abhorrence of idle men and idle compliments, with whom and with which she would have nothing to do.

“ You will write to me, Florence, will you not? and keep an eye on my brother;

he is so thoughtless, you know, and I cannot be there to apply the drag. You will be a sister to him, dearest, for my sake, when you see he needs one?"

"Make sure I shall, Lucy; for your sake and his own....."

She felt confused, and stopped short.

Love is said to beget love; and Florence, although by no means in the overhead-and-ears condition of Wellesly, was unconsciously sinking deeper and deeper into that sentimental slough.

We will not blame, however we may pity her, young Sandys being decidedly the most *distingué*, well-bred, presentable, unpuppy-like cavalier on her bachelor *rôle*. They had been thrown, too, very much together since their introduction, Sir Geoffry absenting himself all day at his club, or in Downing Street, and Madeline not only avoiding

her daughter's society, but appropriating poor Pilkington, who was, in fact, her carry-and-fetch turnspit.

Many a delightful walk, therefore, would Lucy and Florence and the secretary enjoy round and round the square-gardens; and when, sometimes, Miss Price had leisure to join them, Lucy offered the *old* lady her arm; in which case, so strong was the tendency to imitation, that, monkey as he was! Wellesly would think it necessary to accommodate the *young* lady with *his*, when they managed to get on swimmingly, the two friends in front, and the—we need not disguise it—the *lovers* bringing up, with some interval, the rear.

CHAPTER XVII.

It is Sunday morning; a calm, promising day; breakfast over—though none of them seemed to care about breakfast, this must not be set down to any demerits in the meal, which, from frequent experience, I can vouch to be “good at that house;”—and Pilkington having received directions to keep his eye on their luggage, the others of our party strolled down to the quays. Miss Price had expressed herself anxious to inspect the accommodation on board, so they were all to walk the plank.

Once turned the corner of that unpopu-

lar building, where everybody's luggage is sure of being weighed, and equally sure of being over weight, the huge, hissing monster of a steamer displays its bulky yet proportionate dimensions; another moment finds them gathered on its deck.

Miss Price tried to be sick; that is, she thought of being squeamish, which is the best way to bring it on, but was unable. It seemed only reasonable to her small nautical experience that the *mal de mer* should instantly attack them, and for some time she never lost sight of the upper cabins, behind which, in case of extremities, it was her prudent resolution, no doubt, to retire.

The boarding, smooth and clean, without a break from stern to bows; the two sturdy funnels, with their slender, ramrod-fashion children, noisy and sputtering, as children

sometimes are; the Jacks, in their Sunday clothes, unusually trim; the squadron of stewards, fussing about, and caparisoned gaily; the bristling tiers of hencoops, crammed to suffocation with every description of domestic fowl; boxes of pigs, pens of sheep, cages of rabbits and pigeons, mountains of omnigenous vegetables, passengers, and passengers' friends, all *en masse*, yet nothing in the way—sufficiently interested the General's troop to detain them for a long time on deck.

Indeed, it was next to impossible to make Sir William move forward; he had taken up a position facing a dense phalanx of hens and cocks; nor, until Lady Hamlyn, who languished on his arm, had threatened to desert him, did he recover his gallantry, and dive, at the head of the party, down the gangway into the saloon.

There sat the purser, and the very model of what a purser should be he was; fat and jolly, courteous, and the least little bit important: to look at him, you could not help feeling that the dinners on board were unexceptionable; he was, in fact, an animate bill of fare.

The doctor sat conversing with him; they had evidently not met for a month, yet their subject could not have been medical, that purser scarcely looking as if he knew any thing about physic whatever.

Pill-box, a terribly gallant creature, with a face that always seemed scalded or calcined—I cannot certify which—no sooner caught sight of the splendid Lady Hamlyn, than, pulling off his own cap, he administered an arousing nudge to his shipmate, who, starting up, instantaneously uncovered, and, advancing with a semi-official bow,

begged to be informed what name he might have the honour to show to its berth.

“Sir Geoffry and Lady Hamlyn,” returned Madeline, with telling dignity and distinctness, so much so that Sir William looked quite taken aback, having no idea previously of the immense importance accruing to himself from the company in which he had boarded that vessel.

As for the purser, he bowed to his very knees, no great distance after all, and murmuring, “The best cabins in the ship,” led the way.

These apartments inspected, the piano sounded by Florence, and pronounced sadly out of tune, and the purser still marching in front, they visited the engines, whereat Miss Price declared herself much alarmed; Lady Hamlyn endeavoured to faint, be-

cause of their oily exhalations; and Sir William, pre-occupied by sundry live-stock in the inferno, in crossing for'ard, nearly broke his head.

Then they came upon the cows, bringing the bachelor baronet to an instant halt; were pointed to the butcher's shambles; heard of cabins down below, the bare mention of which compelled Miss Price to close her eyes; and, after a peep at the doctor's laboratory, the cook's and baker's shops, and other *multum in parvo* establishments, emerged once more into light, and sight of land.

The time was come; Lucy and Wellesly must part; Lucy and Florence, Wellesly and the Prices, Sir William and Sir Geoffry, but most of all those twain—Lucy and Wellesly!

Around, the same scene went on: mo-

thers, with the fixed stare of agony, looking for the last time at their newly-togaed sons ; wives parting from husbands ; brothers shaking hands, and stifling tears ; sisters crying and sobbing, and finding it of no use to fight against them ; grief and affection, in short, parading the quarter-deck.

It is a ticklish task to say farewell, under most circumstances ; very disagreeable sensations ensue, and no third party has any business to interfere.

We will, therefore, back out of the crowd, followed immediately by Sir William and his timorous sister : Lucy has turned round with a rather superfluous after-thought ; kissing Florence, through her veil, she whispers :—

“Remember your promise about poor Wellesly !” and is gone.

Miss Price has bolted into a cab, has insisted on her brother doing the same, and now beckons Lucy to ascend.

“No, thank you; I shall stand at the step till they move away.”

“It will be too much for you, dear!” replied the other, burying her eyes in a kerchief.

“Oh, no!” was the low rejoinder, as she placed her hand within the aged spinster’s grasp, and withdrew her head, that, out of sight, and to save that lady’s feeling heart, she might rid herself of many tender and resistless tears.

Every now and again, Miss Price would uncover her face, advance her bonnet, for a brief moment eye first the steamer, then Lucy, and, starting back, fall a-crying afresh.

At last the paddles stirred, the vessel rounded, the sailors and loiterers cheered,

and they were off—some off for evermore!

“Get in Lucy, my love; now, coachman, drive away!”

All which will exhibit what leal friends Wellesly had.

END OF VOL. I.





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